



POETS  
ARE  
THE  
TRUMPETS  
WHICH SING  
TO BATTLE.  
POETS  
ARE THE  
UNACKNOWLEDGED  
LEGISLATORS  
OF THE  
WORLD. SHELLEY

The LONGER  
POEMS OF  
WILLIAM @  
WORDSWORTH

EVERY  
PLAN  
I WILL  
GO  
WITH  
THEE  
BE THY  
GUIDE



IN THY  
MOST  
NEED  
TO  
GO  
BY  
THY  
SIDE

LONDON & TORONTO  
PUBLISHED BY J. M. DENT  
& SONS LTD & IN NEW YORK  
BY E. P. DUTTON & CO

FIRST ISSUE OF THIS EDITION . 1908  
REPRINTED . . . . . 1912, 1914, 1919, 1923, 192

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

## EDITOR'S NOTE

IN this volume Wordsworth's Longer Poems are arranged, within the three main groups into which their lesser or greater length divides them, on the same lines, approximately chronological, adopted in the Shorter Poems. This allows "The Prelude" and "The Excursion" to stand together, which is of distinct critical advantage to the reader. Wordsworth's one drama, "The Borderers," is set apart, and given a place by itself at the end of the book.

E. R.

The following is a list of Wordsworth's published works:—

An Evening Walk, An Epistle in Verses Addressed to a Young Lady, 1793; Descriptive Sketches: taken during a Pedestrian Tour in the Italian, Grison, Swiss, and Savoyard Alps, 1793; Lyrical Ballads, with a few other Poems, 1 vol. (four poems in this volume were by Coleridge), 1798; Lyrical Ballads, with other Poems, 2 vols., 1800: the first volume is a re-edition of 1798, with some alterations in text and titles, and in the order of the poems, and with the omission of one of Wordsworth's poems, and the addition of one by Coleridge—the second volume has fresh poems: this edition contains the famous Preface. Lyrical Ballads, with Pastoral and Other Poems, with Appendix on Poetic Diction, 2 vols., 1802; republished in 1805 with slight alterations of text.

Poems, in two volumes, 1807; reprint, ed. T. Hutchinson, 1897; Concerning the Relations of Great Britain, Spain, and Portugal, to each other, and to the Common Enemy, At this Crisis, and specifically as affected by the Convention of Cintra, etc., 1809.

Essay upon Epitaphs, published in the "Friend," February, 1810 (reprinted in Notes to The Excursion). "A Topographical Description of the Country of the Lakes, In the North of England," appeared as a Preface to "Select Views in Cumberland," by the Rev. J. Wilkinson, 1810: it was annexed to the volume of poems published in 1820, and was finally issued, with additions, as "A Guide through the Lakes," 1835. The Excursion, being a Portion of the Recluse, 1810, 1820; Poems, including Lyrical Ballads and the Miscellaneous Pieces of the Author, with Additional Poems, etc. (a collected ed. of Wordsworth's Poems, omitting The Excursion), 1815; The White Doe of Rylstone, or The Fate of the Nortons, 1815; A Letter to a Friend of Robert Burns, 1816; Thanksgiving Ode, January 18, 1816; with other short pieces, chiefly referring to Recent Public Events, 1816; Two Addresses to the Freeholders of Westmoreland, 1818; Peter Bell, A Tale in Verse (with four

Sonnets), 1819; 2nd edition, with slight alterations, 1819; *The Waggoner*, a Poem. To which are added Sonnets (dedicated to Charles Lamb), 1819; *The River Duddon*, a series of sonnets: *Vaudracour and Julia*: and other Poems, 1820; *Miscellaneous Poems*, 4 vols. (not including *The Excursion*), 1820; *Memorials of a Tour on the Continent* (contains one sonnet not reprinted by Wordsworth), 1822; *Ecclesiastical Sketches*, 1822; *Translation of First Book of Æneid* ("Philological Museum"), 1832; *Memorial Lines* written after the death of Charles Lamb, 1835, or 1836; *Yarrow Re-visited*, and other Poems, 1835, 1836, 1839. The Sonnets of William Wordsworth: collected in one volume, with a few additional ones, now first published, 1838; Poems, chiefly of Early and Late Years, including "The Borderers: A Tragedy," 1842 (these works were added as a seventh volume to the Moxon Edition of Poetical Works, 1842); *Kendal and Windermere Railway: Two Letters* reprinted from the *Morning Post*, revised, with additions, probably end of 1844; *Ode on the Installation of His Royal Highness Prince Albert*, as Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, 1847; *The Prelude, or Growth of a Poet's Mind: an Autobiographical Poem*, 1850 (added as vol. viii. to Moxon's Edition of Poetical Works, 1851); *The Recluse*, first book published posthumously, in 1888.

Poetical Works: 5 vols., 1827; reprinted in Paris, one volume, 1828; 4 vols., 1832; 6 vols., 1836 (this Moxon edition was frequently reprinted; the 1840 edition had additional matter in vol. v.); the Notes dictated to Miss Fenwick were first published in 6 vol. edition of 1857. Later Editions: by Prof. Knight, 8 vols., 1882-6, 1896, etc.; in one volume with Preface by Mr. John Morley, 1888; Aldine Edition, by Prof. Dowden, 7 vols., 1892-3; Oxford Miniature Edition, by Mrs. T. Hutchinson, 5 vols., 1895; Edition with Critical Memoir by W. M. Rossetti, 1870, 1879.

A volume of Selections was published by Moxon 1831, reprinted 1834; other Selections have been edited by Francis Turner Palgrave, 1865; Matthew Arnold, 1879; Prof. Knight and other members of the Wordsworth Society, 1888; C. K. Shorter, 1892; Ed. Dowden, 1897; E. Rhys, 1897; Prof. Knight, 1904.

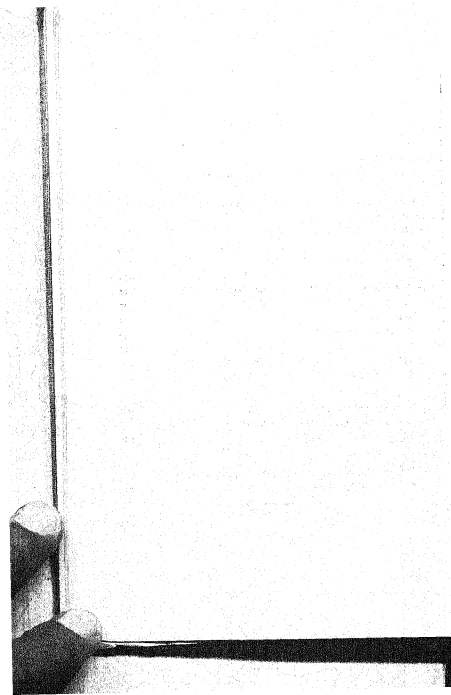
Prose Works: Dr. Grosart, 1876; Poetical and Prose Works, with Dorothy Wordsworth's Journals, ed. Prof. Knight, 1896; Selections, Prof. Knight, 1893. New ed. *Guide to the Lakes* (Sélincourt) in Oxford Library, 1906.

Life: "Memoirs," by Christopher Wordsworth, 1851; "Life," 3 vols., Prof. Knight, 1889; F. W. Myers ("English Men of Letters"), 1881; A. J. Symington, "Biographical Sketch with Selections, etc.," 1881; J. M. Sutherland, "William Wordsworth: the Story of his Life," 1887, 1892; translation of E. Legouis, "The Early Life of William Wordsworth," 1897. One of the latest critical works on Wordsworth is by Prof. W. Raleigh, 1903.

Poems and Extracts chosen by William Wordsworth, from the Countess of Winchelsea and others: (1819) first printed in "Oxford Library," 1906.

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# WORDSWORTH'S LONGER POEMS

## AN EVENING WALK<sup>1</sup>

ADDRESSED TO DOROTHY WORDSWORTH

### ARGUMENT

General Sketch of the Lakes—Author's Regret of his Youth passed amongst them—Short description of Noon—Cascade Scene—Noontide Retreat—Precipice and Sloping Lights—Face of Nature as the Sun declines—Mountain Farm, and the Cock—Slate Quarry—Sunset—Superstition of the Country, connected with that Moment—Swans—Female Beggar—Twilight Objects—Twilight Sounds—Western Lights—Spirits—Night—Moonlight—Hope—Night Sounds—Conclusion.

FAR from my dearest friend, 'tis mine to rove  
Thro' bare grey dell, high wood, and pastoral cove;  
His wizard course where hoary Derwent takes  
Thro' craggs, and forest glooms, and opening lakes,  
Staying his silent waves, to hear the roar  
That stuns the tremulous cliffs of high Lodore:  
Where silver rocks the savage prospect cheer  
Of giant yews that frown on Rydale's mere;  
Where peace to Grasmere's lonely island leads,  
To willowy hedgerows, and to emerald meads;  
Leads to her bridge, rude church, and cottag'd grounds,  
Her rocky sheepwalks, and her woodland bounds;  
Where, bosom'd deep, the shy Winander peeps  
'Mid clust'ring isles, and holly-sprinkl'd steeps;  
Where twilight glens endear my Esthwaite's shore,  
And memory of departed pleasures, more.

Fair scenes! with other eyes, than once, I gaze,  
The ever-varying charm, your round displays,  
Than when, erewhile, I taught, "a happy child,"  
The echoes of your rocks my carols wild:

<sup>1</sup> Composed at school, and during my two first College vacations.

## An Evening Walk

Then did no ebb of cheerfulness demand  
 Sad tides of joy from Melancholy's hand ;  
 In youth's wild eye the livelong day was bright,  
 The sun at morning, and the stars of night,  
 Alike, when first the vales the bittern fills,  
 Or the first woodcocks<sup>1</sup> roam'd the moonlight hills.

Return Delights ! with whom my road begun,  
 When Life rear'd laughing up her morning sun ;  
 When Transport kiss'd away my April tear,  
 " Rocking as in a dream the tedious year ;"  
 When link'd with thoughtless Mirth I cours'd the plain,  
 And hope itself was all I knew of pain.  
 For then, ev'n then, the little heart would beat  
 At times, while young Content forsook her seat,  
 And wild Impatience, panting upward, show'd  
 Where tipp'd with gold the mountain-summits glow'd.  
 Alas ! the idle tale of man is found  
 Depicted in the dial's moral round ;  
 With Hope Reflexion blends her social rays  
 To gild the total tablet of his days ;  
 Yet still, the sport of some malignant Pow'r,  
 He knows but from its shade the present hour.

While, Memory at my side, I wander here,  
 Starts at the simplest sight th' unbidden tear,  
 A form discover'd at the well-known seat,  
 A spot, that angles at the riv'let's feet,  
 The ray the cot of morning trav'ling nigh,  
 And sail that glides the well-known alders by.  
 But why, ungrateful, dwell on idle pain ?  
 To shew her yet some joys to me remain,  
 Say, will my friend, with soft affection's ear,  
 The history of a poet's ev'ning hear ?

When, in the south, the wan noon brooding still,  
 Breath'd a pale steam around the glaring hill,  
 And shades of deep embattl'd clouds were seen  
 Spotting the northern cliffs with lights between ;  
 Gazing the tempting shades to them deny'd,  
 When stood the shorten'd herds amid the tide,  
 Where, from the barren wall's unshelter'd end,  
 Long rails into the shallow lake extend ;

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning of winter, these mountains, in the moonlight nights, are covered with immense quantities of woodcocks ; which, in the dark nights, retire into the woods.

When schoolboys stretch'd their length upon the green  
And round the humming elm, a glimmering scene!  
In the brown park, in flocks, the troubl'd deer  
Shook the still twinkling tail and glancing ear;  
When horses in the wall-girt intake<sup>1</sup> stood,  
Unshaded, eying far below, the flood,  
Crouded behind the swain, in mute distress,  
With forward neck the closing gate to press;  
And long, with wistful gaze, his walk survey'd  
Till dipp'd his pathway in the river shade;

—Then Quiet led me up the huddling rill,  
Bright'ning with water-breaks the sombrous gill;<sup>2</sup>  
To where, while thick above the branches close,  
In dark-brown bason its wild waves repose,  
Inverted shrubs, and moss of darkest green,  
Cling from the rocks, with pale wood-weeds between;  
Save that, atop, the subtle sunbeams shine,  
On wither'd briars that o'er the craggs recline;  
Sole light admitted here, a small cascade,  
Illumes with sparkling foam the twilight shade.  
*Beyond, along the visto of the brook,*  
Where antique roots its bustling path o'erlook,  
The eye reposes on a secret bridge<sup>3</sup>  
Half grey, half shagg'd with ivy to its ridge.

—Sweet rill, farewell! To-morrow's noon again,  
Shall hide me wooing long thy wildwood strain;  
But now the sun has gain'd his western road,  
And eve's mild hour invites my steps abroad.

While, near the midway cliff, the silver'd kite  
In many a whistling circle wheels her flight;  
Slant wat'ry lights, from parting clouds a-pace,  
Travel along the precipice's base;  
Cheering its naked waste of scatter'd stone  
By lichens grey, and scanty moss o'ergrown,  
Where scarce the foxglove peeps, and thistle's beard,  
And desert stone-chat, all day long, is heard.

How pleasant, as the yellowing sun declines,  
And with long rays and shades the landscape shines;

<sup>1</sup> The word *intake* is local, and signifies a mountain-inclosure.

<sup>2</sup> Gill is also, I believe, a term confined to this country. Glen, gill, and dingle, have the same meaning.

<sup>3</sup> The reader, who has made the tour of this country, will recognize in this description the features which characterize the lower waterfall in the gardens of Rydale.

To mark the birches' stems all golden light,  
 That lit the dark slant woods with silvery white!  
 The willows weeping trees, that twinkling hoar,  
 Glanc'd oft upturn'd along the breezy shore,  
 Low bending o'er the colour'd water, fold  
 Their moveless boughs and leaves like threads of gold;  
 The skiffs with naked masts at anchor laid,  
 Before the boat-house peeping thro' the shade;  
 Th' unwearied glance of woodman's echo'd stroke;  
 And curling from the trees the cottage smoke.

Their pannier'd train a group of potters goad,  
 Winding from side to side up the steep road;  
 The peasant from yon cliff of fearful edge  
 Shot, down the headlong pathway darts his sledge;  
 Bright beams the lonely mountain horse illumine,  
 Feeding 'mid purple heath, "green rings,"<sup>1</sup> and broom;  
 While the sharp slope the slacken'd team confounds,  
 Downward<sup>2</sup> the pond'rous timber-wain resounds;  
 Beside their sheltering cross<sup>3</sup> of wall, the flock  
 Feeds on in light, nor thinks of winter's shock;  
 In foamy breaks the rill, with merry song,  
 Dash'd down the rough rock, lightly leaps along;  
 From lonesome chapel at the mountain's feet,  
 Three humble bells their rustic chime repeat;  
 Sounds from the water-side the hammer'd boat;  
 And blasted quarry thunders heard remote.

Ev'n here, amid the sweep of endless woods,  
 Blue pomp of lakes, high cliffs, and falling floods,  
 Not undelightful are the simplest charms  
 Found by the verdant door of mountain farms.

Sweetly<sup>4</sup> ferocious round his native walks,  
 Gaz'd by his sister-wives, the monarch stalks;  
 Spur clad his nervous feet, and firm his tread,  
 A crest of purple tops his warrior head.

<sup>1</sup> "Vivid rings of green."—GREENWOOD'S Poem on Shooting.

<sup>2</sup> "Down the rough slope the pond'rous waggon rings."—BRATTIE.

<sup>3</sup> These rude structures, to protect the flocks, are frequent in this country: the traveller may recollect one in Withburne, another upon Whinlatter.

<sup>4</sup> "Dolcemente feroce."—TASSO.

In this description of the cock, I remembered a spirited one of the same animal in *L'Agriculture, ou Les Géorgiques Françaises* of M. Rossuet.

Bright sparks his black and haggard eyeball hurls  
Afar, his tail he closes and unfurls ;  
Whose state, like pine-trees, waving to and fro,  
Droops, and o'er canopies his regal brow ;  
On tiptoe rear'd he blows his clarion throat,  
Threaten'd by faintly answering farms remote.

Bright'ning the cliffs between where sombrous pine,  
And yew-trees o'er the silver rocks recline,  
I love to mark the quarry's moving trains,  
Dwarf pannier'd steeds, and men, and numerous wains :  
How busy the enormous hive within,  
While Echo dallies with the various din !  
Some, hardly heard their chisel's clinking sound,  
Toil, small as pigmies, in the gulph profound ;  
Some, dim between th' aerial cliffs descry'd,  
O'erwalk the viewless plank from side to side ;  
These by the pale-blue rocks that ceaseless ring  
Glad from their airy baskets hang and sing.

Hung o'er a cloud, above the steep that rears  
Its edge all flame, the broad'ning sun appears ;  
A long blue bar its ægis orb divides,  
And breaks the spreading of its golden tides ;  
And now it touches on the purple steep  
That flings his shadow on the pictur'd deep.  
Cross the calm lakes blue shades the cliffs aspire,  
With tow'rs and woods a "prospect all on fire ;"  
The coves and secret hollows thro' a ray  
Of fainter gold a purple gleam betray ;  
The gilded turf arrays in richer green  
Each speck of lawn the broken rocks between ;  
Deep yellow beams the scatter'd boles illumine,  
Far in the level forest's central gloom ;  
Waving his hat, the shepherd in the vale  
Directs his winding dog the cliffs to scale,  
That, barking busy 'mid the glittering rocks,  
Hunts, where he points, the intercepted flocks ;  
Where oaks o'erhang the road the radiance shoots  
On tawny earth, wild weeds, and twisted roots ;  
The Druid<sup>1</sup> stones their lighted fane unfold,  
And all the babbling brooks are liquid gold ;

<sup>1</sup> Not far from Broughton is a Druid monument, of which I do not recollect that any tour descriptive of this country makes mention. Perhaps this poem may fall into the hands of some curious traveller, who may thank me for informing him, that up the Duddon, the river

Sunk<sup>1</sup> to a curve the day-star lessens still,  
Gives one bright glance, and sinks behind the hill.

In these lone vales, if aught of faith may claim,  
Thin silver hairs, and ancient hamlet fame ;  
When up the hills, as now, retreats the light,  
Strange apparitions mock the village sight.

A desperate form appears, that spurs his steed,  
Along the midway cliffs with violent speed ;  
Unhurt pursues his lengthen'd flight, while all  
Attend, at every stretch, his headlong fall.  
Anon, in order mounts a gorgeous show  
Of horsemen shadows winding to and fro ;  
And now the van is gilt with evening's beam,  
The rear thro' iron brown betrays a sullen gleam ;  
Lost<sup>2</sup> gradual o'er the heights in pomp they go,  
While silent stands th' admiring vale below ;  
Till, but the lonely beacon all is fled.  
That tips with eve's last gleam his spiry head.  
Now while the solemn evening Shadows sail,  
On red slow-waving pinions down the vale,  
And, fronting the bright west in stronger lines,  
The oak its dark'ning boughs and foliage twines,  
I love beside the flowing lake to stray,  
Where winds the road along the secret bay ;  
By rills that tumble down the woody steep,  
And run in transport to the dimpling deeps ;  
Along the "wild meand'ring" shore to view,  
Obsequious Grace the winding swan pursue.  
He swells his lifted chest, and backward flings  
His bridling neck between his tow'ring wings ;  
Stately, and burning in his pride, divides  
And glorying looks around, the silent tides :  
On as he floats, the silver'd waters glow,  
Proud of the varying arch and moveless form of snow.  
While tender Cares and mild domestic Loves,  
With furtive watch pursue her as she moves ;  
The female with a meeker charm succeeds,  
And her brown little ones around her leads,

which forms the estuary at Broughton, may be found some of the most romantic scenery of these mountains.

<sup>1</sup> From Thomson : see Scott's Critical Essays.

<sup>2</sup> See a description of an appearance of this kind in Clark's "Survey of the Lakes," accompanied with vouchers of its veracity that may amuse the reader.

Nibbling the water lilies as they pass,  
Or playing wanton with the floating grass:  
She in a mother's care, her beauty's pride  
Forgets, unweary'd watching every side,  
She calls them near, and with affection sweet  
Alternately relieves their weary feet;  
Alternately<sup>1</sup> they mount her back, and rest  
Close by her mantling wings' embraces prest.

Long may ye roam these hermit waves that sleep,  
In birch besprinkl'd cliffs embosom'd deep;  
These fairy holms untrodden, still, and green,  
Whose shades protect the hidden wave serene;  
Whence fragrance scents the water's desert gale,  
The violet, and the lily<sup>2</sup> of the vale;  
Where, tho' her far-off twilight ditty steal,  
They not the trip of harmless milkmaid feel.

Yon tuft conceals your home, your cottage bow'r,  
Fresh water rushes strew the verdant floor;  
Long grass and willows form the woven wall,  
And swings above the roof the poplar tall.  
Thence issuing oft, unwieldy as ye stalk,  
Ye crush with broad black feet your flow'ry walk;  
Safe from your door ye hear at breezy morn,  
The hound, the horse's tread, and mellow horn;  
At peace inverted your lithe necks ye lave,  
With the green bottom strewing o'er the wave;  
No ruder sound your desert haunts invades,  
Than waters dashing wild, or rocking shades.  
Ye ne'er, like hapless human wanderers, throw  
Your young on winter's winding sheet of snow.

Fair swan! by all a mother's joys caress'd,  
Haply some wretch has ey'd, and call'd thee bless'd;  
Who faint, and beat by summer's breathless ray,  
Hath dragg'd her babes along this weary way;  
While arrowy fire extorting feverish groans,  
Shot stinging through her stark o'er-labour'd bones.  
—With backward gaze, lock'd joints, and step of pain,  
Her seat scarce left, she strives, alas! in vain,  
To teach their limbs along the burning road

<sup>1</sup> This is a fact of which I have been an eye-witness.

<sup>2</sup> The lily of the valley is found in great abundance in the smaller islands of Winandermere.

A few short steps to totter with their load,  
 Shakes her numb arm that slumbers with its weight,  
 And eyes through tears the mountain's shadeless height;  
 And bids her soldier come her woes to share,  
 Asleep on Bunker's charnel hill afar;  
 For hope's deserted well why wistful look?  
 Chok'd is the pathway, and the pitcher broke.

I see her now, deny'd to lay her head,  
 On cold blue nights, in hut or straw-built shed;  
 Turn to a silent smile their sleepy cry,  
 By pointing to a shooting star on high:  
 I hear, while in the forest depth he sees,  
 The Moon's fix'd gaze between the opening trees,  
 In broken sounds her elder grief demand,  
 And skyward lift, like one that prays, his hand,  
 It, in that country, where he dwells afar,  
 His father views that good, that kindly star;  
 —Ah me! all light is mute amid the gloom,  
 The interlunar cavern of the tomb.  
 —When low-hung clouds each star of summer hide,  
 And fireless are the valleys far and wide,  
 Where the brook brawls along the painful road,  
 Dark with bat haunted ashes stretching broad,  
 The distant clock forgot, and chilling dew,  
 Pleas'd thro' the dusk their breaking smiles to view,  
 Oft has she taught them on her lap to play  
 Delighted, with the glow-worm's harmless ray  
 Toss'd light from hand to hand; while on the ground  
 Small circles of green radiance gleam around.

Oh! when the bitter showers her path assail,  
 And roars between the hills the torrent gale,  
 —No more her breath can thaw their fingers cold,  
 Their frozen arms her neck no more can fold;  
 Scarce heard, their chattering lips her shoulder chill,  
 And her cold back their colder bosoms thrill;  
 All blind she wilders o'er the lightless heath,  
 Led by Fear's cold wet hand, and dogg'd by Death;  
 Death, as she turns her neck the kiss to seek,  
 Breaks off the dreadful kiss with angry shriek.  
 Snatch'd from her shoulder with despairing moan,  
 She clasps them at that dim-seen roofless stone,—  
 "Now ruthless Tempest launch thy deadliest dart!  
 Fall fires—but let us perish heart to heart."

Weak roof a cowering form two babes to shield,  
And faint the fire a dying heart can yield ;  
Press the sad kiss, fond mother ! vainly fears  
Thy flooded cheek to wet them with its tears ;  
Soon shall the Lightning hold before thy head  
His torch, and shew them slumbering in their bed,  
No tears can chill them, and no bosom warms,  
Thy breast their death-bed, coffin'd in thine arms.

Sweet are the sounds that mingle from afar,  
Heard by calm lakes, as peeps the folding star,  
Where the duck dabbles 'mid the rustling sedge,  
And feeding pike starts from the water's edge,  
Or the swan stirs the reeds, his neck and bill  
Wetting, that drip upon the water still ;  
And heron, as resounds the trodden shore,  
Shoots upward, darting his long neck before.  
While, by the scene compos'd the breast subsides,  
Nought wakens or disturbs its tranquil tides ;  
Nought but the char that for the may-fly leaps,  
And breaks the mirror of the circling deeps ;  
Or clock, that blind against the wanderer born,  
Drops at his feet, and stills his droning horn.  
—The whistling swain that plods his ringing way  
Where the slow waggon winds along the bay ;  
The sigh<sup>1</sup> of swallow flocks that twittering sweep,  
The solemn curfew swinging long and deep ;  
The talking boat that moves with pensive sound,  
Or drops his anchor down with plunge profound ;  
Of boys that bathe remote the faint uproar,  
And restless piper wearying out the shore ;  
These all to swell the village murmurs blend,  
That soften'd from the water-head descend.  
While in sweet cadence rising small and still  
The far-off minstrels of the haunted hill,  
As the last bleating of the fold expires,  
Tune in the mountain dells their water tyres.

Now with religious awe the farewell light  
Blends with the solemn colouring of the night ;  
'Mid groves of clouds that crest the mountain's brow,  
And round the West's proud lodge their shadows throw,

<sup>1</sup> "Sigh," a Scotch word, expressive, as Mr. Gilpin explains it, of the sound of the motion of a stick through the air, or of the wind passing through the trees. See Burns' *Cotter's Saturday Night*.

Like Una<sup>1</sup> shining on her gloomy way,  
 The half seen form of Twilight roams astray ;  
 Thence, from three paly loopholes mild and small,  
 Slow lights upon the lake's still bosom fall,  
 Beyond the mountain's giant reach that hides  
 In deep determin'd gloom his subject tides.  
 —'Mid the dark steeps repose the shadowy streams,  
 As touch'd with dawning moonlight's hoary gleams,  
 Long streaks of fairy light the wave illumine  
 With bordering lines of intervening gloom,  
 Soft o'er the surface creep the lustres pale  
 Tracking with silvering path the changeful gale.  
 —'Tis restless magic all ; at once the bright  
 Breaks on the shade, the shade upon the light,  
 Fair Spirits are abroad ; in sportive chase  
 Brushing with lucid wands the water's face,  
 While music stealing round the glimmering deeps  
 Charms the tall circle of th' enchanted steeps.  
 —As thro' th' astonish'd woods the notes ascend,  
 The mountain streams their rising song suspend ;  
 Below Eve's listening Star the sheep walk stills  
 Its drowsy tinklings on th' attentive hills ;  
 The milkmaid stops her ballad, and her pail  
 Stays its low murmur in th' unbreathing vale ;  
 No night-duck clamours for his wilder'd mate,  
 Aw'd, while below the Genii hold their state.  
 —The pomp is fled, and mute the wondrous strains,  
 No wrack of all the pageant scene remains,  
 So<sup>2</sup> vanish those fair Shadows, human joys,  
 But Death alone their vain regret destroys.  
 Unheeded Night has overcome the vales,  
 On the dark earth the baffl'd vision fails,  
 If peep between the clouds a star on high,  
 There turns for glad repose the weary eye ,  
 The latest lingerer of the forest train,  
 The lone black fir, forsakes the faded plain ;  
 Last evening sight, the cottage smoke no more,  
 Lost in the deepen'd darkness, glimmers hoar ;  
 High towering from the sullen dark-brown mere,  
 Like a black wall, the mountain steeps appear,

Alluding to this passage of Spenser—

" Her angel face  
 As the great eye of Heaven shined bright,  
 And made a sunshine in that shady place."

"So break those glittering shadows, human joys."—YOUNG.

Thence red from different heights with restless gleam  
Small cottage lights across the water stream,  
Nought else of man or life remains behind  
To call from other worlds the wilder'd mind,  
Till pours the wakeful bird her solemn strains  
Heard<sup>1</sup> by the night-calm of the wat'ry plains.  
—No purple prospects now the mind employ  
Glowing in golden sunset tints of joy,  
But o'er the sooth'd accordant heart we feel  
A sympathetic twilight slowly steal,  
And ever, as we fondly muse, we find  
The soft gloom deep'ning on the tranquil mind.  
Stay! pensive, sadly-pleasing visions, stay!  
Ah no! as fades the vale, they fade away.  
Yet still the tender, vacant gloom remains,  
Still the cold cheek its shuddering tear retains.

The bird, with fading light who ceas'd to thread  
Silent the hedge or steaming rivulet's bed,  
From his grey re-appearing tower shall soon  
Salute with boding note the rising moon,  
Frosting with hoary light the pearly ground,  
And pouring deeper blue to Æther's bound;  
Rejoic'd her solemn pomp of clouds to fold  
In robes of azure, fleecy white, and gold,  
While rose and poppy, as the glow-worm fades,  
Checquer with paler red the thicket shades.

Now o'er the eastern hill, where Darkness broods  
O'er all its vanish'd dells, and lawns, and woods  
Where but a mass of shade the sight can trace,  
She lifts in silence up her lovely face;  
Above the gloomy valley flings her light,  
Far to the western slopes with hamlets white;  
And gives, where woods the checquer'd upland strew,  
To the green corn of summer autumn's hue.

Thus Hope, first pouring from her blessed horn  
Her dawn, far lovelier than the Moon's own morn;  
'Till higher mounted, strives in vain to cheer  
The weary hills, impervious, black'ning near;  
—Yet does she still, undaunted, throw the while  
On darling spots remote her tempting smile.  
—Ev'n now she decks for me a distant scene,  
(For dark and broad the gulph of time between)

<sup>1</sup> "Charming the night-calm with her powerful song." A line of one of our older poets.

Gilding that cottage with her fondest ray,  
(Sole bourn, sole wish, sole object of my way ;  
How fair its lawn and silvery woods appear !  
How sweet its streamlet murmurs in mine ear !)  
Where we, my friend, to golden days shall rise,  
Till our small share of hardly-paining sighs  
(For sighs will ever trouble human breath)  
Creep hush'd into the tranquil breast of Death.  
But now the clear-bright Moon her zenith gains,  
And rimy without speck extend the plains ;  
The deepest dell the mountain's breast displays,  
Scarce hides a shadow from her searching rays ;  
From the dark-blue "faint silvery threads" divide  
The hills, while gleams below the azure tide ;  
The scene is waken'd, yet its peace unbroke,  
By silver'd wreaths of quiet charcoal smoke,  
That, o'er the ruins of the fallen wood,  
Steal down the hills, and spread along the flood.  
The song of mountain streams unheard by day,  
Now hardly heard, beguiles my homeward way.  
All air is, as the sleeping water, still,  
List'ning th' aërial music of the hill,  
Broke only by the slow clock tolling deep,  
Or shout that wakes the ferry-man from sleep,  
Soon follow'd by his hollow-parting oar,  
And echo'd hoof approaching the far shore ;  
Sound of clos'd gate, across the water borne,  
Hurrying the feeding hare thro' rustling corn ;  
The tremulous sob of the complaining owl ;  
And at long intervals the mill-dog's howl ;  
The distant forge's swinging thump profound ;  
Or yell in the deep woods of lonely hound.

DESCRIPTIVE SKETCHES<sup>1</sup>

TAKEN DURING A PEDESTRIAN TOUR AMONG THE ALPS

[DEDICATED] TO

THE REV. ROBERT JONES<sup>2</sup>

FELLOW OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

WERE there, below, a spot of holy ground  
Where from distress a refuge might be found,  
And solitude prepare the soul for heaven;  
Sure, nature's God that spot to man had given  
Where falls the purple morning far and wide  
In flakes of light upon the mountain side;  
Where with loud voice the power of water shakes  
The leafy wood, or sleeps in quiet lakes.

Yet not unrecompensed the man shall roam,  
Who at the call of summer quits his home,  
And plods through some wide realm o'er vale and height,  
Though seeking only holiday delight;  
At least, not owing to himself an aim  
To which the sage would give a prouder name.  
No gains too cheaply earned his fancy cloy,  
Though every passing zephyr whispers joy;  
Brisk toil, alternating with ready ease,  
Feeds the clear current of his sympathies.  
For him sod-seats the cottage-door adorn;  
And peeps the far-off spire, his evening bourn;  
Dear is the forest frowning o'er his head,  
And dear the velvet green-sward to his tread:  
Moves there a cloud o'er mid-day's flaming eye?  
Upward he looks—"and calls it luxury:"

<sup>1</sup> Much the greatest part of this poem was composed during my walks upon the banks of the Loire in the years 1791, 1792. I will only notice that the description of the valley filled with mist, beginning—"In solemn shapes," was taken from that beautiful region of which the principal features are Langarn and Sarnen. Nothing that I ever saw in nature left a more delightful impression on my mind than that which I have attempted, alas! how feebly, to convey to others in these lines. Those two lakes have always interested me especially, from bearing, in their size and other features, a resemblance to those of the North of England. It is much to be deplored that a district so beautiful should be so unhealthy as it is.

<sup>2</sup> For the accompanying letter, see the succeeding volumes of Wordsworth's prose works.—*Ed.*

Kind Nature's charities his steps attend ;  
 In every babbling brook he finds a friend ;  
 While chastening thoughts of sweetest use, bestowed  
 By wisdom, moralise his pensive road.  
 Host of his welcome inn, the noon-tide bower,  
 To his spare meal he calls the passing poor ;  
 He views the sun uplift his golden fire,  
 Or sink, with heart alive like Memnon's lyre ;<sup>1</sup>  
 Blesses the moon that comes with kindly ray,  
 To light him shaken by his rugged way.  
 Back from his sight no bashful children steal ;  
 He sits a brother at the cottage-meal ;  
 His humble looks no shy restraint impart ;  
 Around him plays at will the virgin heart.  
 While unsuspended wheels the village dance,  
 The maidens eye him with enquiring glance,  
 Much wondering by what fit of crazing care,  
 Or desperate love, bewildered, he came there.

A hope, that prudence could not then approve,  
 That clung to Nature with a truant's love,  
 O'er Gallia's wastes of corn my footsteps led ;  
 Her files of road-elms, high above my head  
 In long-drawn vista, rustling in the breeze ;  
 Or where her pathways straggle as they please  
 By lonely farms and secret villages.  
 But lo ! the Alps ascending white in air,  
 Toy with the sun and glitter from afar.

And now, emerging from the forest's gloom,  
 I greet thee, Chartreuse, while I mourn thy doom.  
 Whither is fled that Power whose frown severe  
 Awed sober Reason till she crouched in fear ?  
 That Silence, once in deathlike fetters bound,  
 Chains that were loosened only by the sound  
 Of holy rites chanted in measured round ?  
 —The voice of blasphemy the fane alarms,  
 The cloister startles at the gleam of arms.  
 The thundering tube the aged angler hears,  
 Bent o'er the groaning flood that sweeps away his tears  
 Cloud-piercing pine-trees nod their troubled heads,  
 Spires, rocks, and lawns a browner night o'erspreads ;  
 Strong terror checks the female peasant's sighs,  
 And start the astonished shades at female eyes.

<sup>1</sup> The lyre of Memnon is reported to have emitted melancholy or cheerful tones, as it was touched by the sun's evening or morning rays.

From Bruno's forest screams the affrighted jay,  
And slow the insulted eagle wheels away.  
A viewless flight of laughing Demons mock  
The Cross, by angels planted<sup>1</sup> on the aerial rock.  
The "parting Genius" sighs with hollow breath  
Along the mystic streams of Life and Death.<sup>2</sup>  
Swelling the outcry dull, that long resounds  
Portentous through her old woods' trackless bounds,  
Vallombre,<sup>3</sup> 'mid her falling fanes, deplores,  
For ever broke, the sabbath of her bowers.

More pleased, my foot the hidden margin roves  
Of Como, bosomed deep in chestnut groves.  
No meadows thrown between, the giddy steep  
Tower, bare or sylvan, from the narrow deeps.  
—To towns, whose shades of no rude noise complain,  
From ringing team apart and grating wain—  
To flat-roofed towns, that touch the water's bound,  
Or lurk in woody sunless glens profound,  
Or, from the bending rocks, obtrusive cling,  
And o'er the whitened wave their shadows fling—  
The pathway leads, as round the steeps it twines ;  
And Silence loves its purple roof of vines.  
The loitering traveller hence, at evening, sees  
From rock-hewn steps the sail between the trees ;  
Or marks, 'mid opening cliffs, fair dark-eyed maids  
Tend the small harvest of their garden glades ;  
Or stops the solemn mountain-shades to view  
Stretch o'er the pictured mirror broad and blue,  
And track the yellow lights from steep to steep,  
As up the opposing hills they slowly creep.  
Aloft, here, half a village shines, arrayed  
In golden light ; half hides itself in shade :  
While, from amid the darkened roofs, the spire,  
Restlessly flashing, seems to mount like fire :  
There, all unshaded, blazing forests throw  
Rich golden verdure on the lake below.  
Slow glides the sail along the illumined shore,  
And steals into the shade the lazy oar ;  
Soft bosoms breathe around contagious sighs,  
And amorous music on the water dies.

How blest, delicious scene ! the eye that greets

<sup>1</sup> Alluding to crosses seen on the tops of the spiry rocks of Chartreuse, which have every appearance of being inaccessible.

<sup>2</sup> Names of rivers at the Chartreuse.

<sup>3</sup> Name of one of the valleys of the Chartreuse.

Thy open beauties, or thy lone retreats ;  
Beholds the unwearied sweep of wood that scales  
Thy cliffs ; the endless waters of thy vales ;  
Thy lowly cots that sprinkle all the shore,  
Each with its household boat beside the door ;  
Thy torrents shooting from the clear-blue sky ;  
Thy towns, that cleave, like swallows' nests, on high ;  
That glimmer hoar in eve's last light, descried  
Dim from the twilight water's shaggy side,  
Whence lutes and voices down the enchanted woods  
Steal, and compose the oar-forgotten floods ;  
Thy lake, that, streaked or dappled, blue or grey,  
'Mid smoking woods gleams hid from morning's ray  
Slow-travelling down the western hills, to enfold  
Its green-tinged margin in a blaze of gold ;  
Thy glittering steeples, whence the matin bell  
Calls forth the woodman from his desert cell,  
And quickens the blithe sound of oars that pass  
Along the steaming lake, to early mass.  
But now farewell to each and all—adieu  
To every charm, and last and chief to you,  
Ye lovely maidens that in noontide shade  
Rest near your little plots of wheaten glade ;  
To all that binds the soul in powerless trance,  
Lip-dewing song, and ringlet-tossing dance ;  
Where sparkling eyes and breaking smiles illumine  
The sylvan cabin's lute-enlivened gloom.  
—Alas ! the very murmur of the streams  
Breathes o'er the failing soul voluptuous dreams,  
While Slavery, forcing the sunk mind to dwell  
On joys that might disgrace the captive's cell,  
Her shameless timbrel shakes on Como's marge,  
And lures from bay to bay the vocal barge.  
Yet are thy softer arts with power indued  
To soothe and cheer the poor man's solitude.  
By silent cottage-doors, the peasant's home  
Left vacant for the day, I loved to roam.  
But once I pierced the mazes of a wood  
In which a cabin undeserted stood ;  
There an old man an olden measure scanned  
On a rude viol touched with withered hand.  
As lambs or fawns in April clustering lie  
Under a hoary oak's thin canopy,  
Stretched at his feet, with stedfast upward eye,  
His children's children listened to the sound ;

—A Hermit with his family around!

But let us hence; for fair Locarno smiles  
Embowered in walnut slopes and citron isles:  
Or seek at eve the banks of Tusa's stream,  
Where, 'mid dim towers and woods, her<sup>1</sup> waters gleam:  
From the bright wave, in solemn gloom, retire  
The dull-red steeps, and, darkening still, aspire  
To where afar rich orange lustres glow  
Round undistinguished clouds, and rocks, and snow:  
Or, led where Via Mala's chasms confine  
The indignant waters of the infant Rhine,  
Hang o'er the abyss, whose else impervious gloom  
His burning eyes with fearful light illumine.

The mind condemned, without reprieve, to go  
O'er life's long deserts with its charge of woe,  
With sad congratulation joins the train  
Where beasts and men together o'er the plain  
Move on—a mighty caravan of pain:  
Hope, strength, and courage, social suffering brings,  
Freshening the wilderness with shades and springs.  
—There be whose lot far otherwise is cast:  
Sole human tenant of the piny waste,  
By choice or doom a gipsy wanders here,  
A nursing babe her only comforter;  
Lo, where she sits beneath yon shaggy rock,  
A cowering shape half hid in curling smoke!

When lightning among clouds and mountain-snows  
Predominates, and darkness comes and goes,  
And the fierce torrent, at the flashes broad  
Starts, like a horse, beside the glaring road—  
She seeks a covert from the battering shower  
In the roofed bridge;<sup>2</sup> the bridge, in that dread hour,  
Itself all trembling at the torrent's power.

Nor is she more at ease on some *still* night,  
When not a star supplies the comfort of its light;  
Only the waning moon hangs dull and red  
Above a melancholy mountain's head,  
Then sets. In total gloom the Vagrant sighs,  
Stoops her sick head, and shuts her weary eyes;  
Or on her fingers counts the distant clock,

<sup>1</sup> The river along whose banks you descend in crossing the Alps by the Simplon Pass.

<sup>2</sup> Most of the bridges among the Alps are of wood, and covered: these bridges have a heavy appearance, and rather injure the effect of the scenery in some places.

Or, to the drowsy crow of midnight cock,  
Listens, or quakes while from the forest's gulf  
Howls near and nearer yet the famished wolf.

From the green vale of Urseren smooth and wide  
Descend we now, the maddened Reuss our guide ;  
By rocks that, shutting out the blessed day,  
Cling tremblingly to rocks as loose as they ;  
By cells <sup>1</sup> upon whose image, while he prays,  
The kneeling peasant scarcely dares to gaze ;  
By many a votive death-cross <sup>2</sup> planted near,  
And watered duly with the pious tear,  
That faded silent from the upward eye  
Unmoved with each rude form of peril nigh ;  
Fixed on the anchor left by Him who saves  
Alike in whelming snows, and roaring waves.

But soon a peopled region on the sight  
Opens—a little world of calm delight ;  
Where mists, suspended on the expiring gale,  
Spread rooflike o'er the deep secluded vale,  
And beams of evening slipping in between,  
Gently illuminate a sober scene :—  
Here, on the brown wood-cottages <sup>3</sup> they sleep,  
There, over rock or sloping pasture creep.  
On as we journey, in clear view displayed,  
The still vale lengthens underneath its shade  
Of low-hung vapour : on the freshened mead  
The green light sparkles ;—the dim bowers recede.  
While pastoral pipes and streams the landscape lull,  
And bells of passing mules that tinkle dull,  
In solemn shapes before the admiring eye  
Dilated hang the misty pines on high,  
Huge convent domes with pinnacles and towers,  
And antique castles seen through gleamy showers.

From such romantic dreams, my soul, awake !  
To sterner pleasure, where, by Uri's lake  
In Nature's pristine majesty outspread,  
Winds neither road nor path for foot to tread :  
The rocks rise naked as a wall, or stretch  
Far o'er the water, hung with groves of beech ;

<sup>1</sup> The Catholic religion prevails here : these cells are, as is well known, very common in the Catholic countries, planted, like the Roman tombs, along the road side.

<sup>2</sup> Crosses, commemorative of the deaths of travellers by the fall of snow, and other accidents, are very common along this dreadful road.

<sup>3</sup> The houses in the more retired Swiss valleys are all built of wood.

Aërial pines from loftier steeps ascend,  
Nor stop but where creation seems to end.  
Yet here and there, if 'mid the savage scene  
Appears a scanty plot of smiling green,  
Up from the lake a zigzag path will creep  
To reach a small wood-hut hung boldly on the steep,  
—Before those thresholds (never can they know  
The face of traveller passing to and fro,)   
No peasant leans upon his pole, to tell  
For whom at morning tolled the funeral bell;  
Their watch-dog ne'er his angry bark foregoes,  
Touched by the beggar's moan of human woes;  
The shady porch ne'er offered a cool seat  
To pilgrims overcome by summer's heat.  
Yet thither the world's business finds its way  
At times, and tales unsought beguile the day,  
And *there* are those fond thoughts which Solitude,  
However stern, is powerless to exclude.  
There doth the maiden watch her lover's sail  
Approaching, and upbraid the tardy gale;  
At midnight listens till his parting oar,  
And its last echo, can be heard no more.

And what if ospreys, cormorants, herons, cry  
Amid tempestuous vapours driving by,  
Or hovering over wastes too bleak to rear  
That common growth of earth, the foodful ear;  
Where the green apple shrivels on the spray,  
And pines the unripened pear in summer's kindest ray,  
Contentment shares the desolate domain  
With Independence, child of high Disdain.  
Exulting 'mid the winter of the skies,  
Shy as the jealous chamois, Freedom flies,  
And grasps by fits her sword, and often eyes;  
And sometimes, as from rock to rock she bounds  
The Patriot nymph starts at imagined sounds,  
And, wildly pausing, oft she hangs aghast,  
Whether some old Swiss air bath checked her haste  
Or thrill of Spartan life is caught between the blast.

Swoln with incessant rains from hour to hour,  
All day the floods a deepening murmur pour:  
The sky is veiled, and every cheerful sight:  
Dark is the region as with coming night;  
But what a sudden burst of overpowering light!  
Triumphant on the bosom of the storm,  
Glances the wheeling eagle's glorious form!

Eastward, in long perspective glittering, shine  
The wood-crowned cliffs that o'er the lake recline;  
Those lofty cliffs a hundred streams unfold,  
At once to pillars turned that flame with gold:  
Behind his sail the peasant shrinks, to shun  
The *west*, that burns like one dilated sun,  
A crucible of mighty compass, felt  
By mountains, glowing till they seem to melt.

But, lo! the boatman, overawed, before  
The pictured fane of Tell suspends his oar;  
Confused the Marathonian tale appears,  
While his eyes sparkle with heroic tears.  
And who, that walks where men of ancient days  
Have wrought with godlike arm the deeds of praise,  
Feels not the spirit of the place control,  
Or rouse and agitate his labouring soul?  
Say, who, by thinking on Canadian hills,  
Or wild Aosta lulled by Alpine rills,  
On Zutphen's plain; or on that highland dell,  
Through which rough Garry cleaves his way, can tell  
What high resolves exalt the tenderest thought  
Of him whom passion rivets to the spot,  
Where breathed the gale that caught Wolfe's happiest sigh,  
And the last sunbeam fell on Bayard's eye;  
Where bleeding Sidney from the cup retired,  
And glad Dundee in "faint huzzas" expired?

But now with other mind I stand alone  
Upon the summit of this naked cone,  
And watch the fearless chamois-hunter chase  
His prey, through tracts abrupt of desolate space,  
<sup>1</sup> Through vacant worlds where Nature never gave  
A brook to murmur or a bough to wave,  
Which unsubstantial Phantoms sacred keep;  
Thro' worlds where Life, and Voice, and Motion sleep;  
Where silent Hours their deathlike sway extend,  
Save when the avalanche breaks loose, to rend  
Its way with uproar, till the ruin, drowned  
In some dense wood or gulf of snow profound,  
Mocks the dull ear of Time with deaf abortive sound.  
—'Tis his, while wandering on from height to height,  
To see a planier's pomp and steady light  
In the least star of scarce-appearing night;

<sup>1</sup> For most of the images in the next sixteen verses, I am indebted to M. Raymond's interesting observations annexed to his translation of Coxe's Tour in Switzerland.

While the pale moon moves near him, on the bound  
Of ether, shining with diminished round,  
And far and wide the icy summits blaze,  
Rejoicing in the glory of her rays :  
To him the day-star glitters small and bright,  
Shorn of its beams, insufferably white,  
And he can look beyond the sun, and view  
Those fast-receding depths of sable blue  
Flying till vision can no more pursue !  
—At once bewildering mists around him close,  
And cold and hunger are his least of woes ;  
The Demon of the snow, with angry roar  
Descending, shuts for aye his prison door.  
Soon with despair's whole weight his spirits sink ;  
Bread has he none, the snow must be his drink ;  
And, ere his eyes can close upon the day,  
The eagle of the Alps o'ershades her prey.

Now couch thyself where, heard with fear afar,  
Thunders through echoing pines the headlong Aar ;  
Or rather stay to taste the mild delights  
Of pensive Underwalden's<sup>1</sup> pastoral heights.  
—Is there who 'mid these awful wilds has seen  
The native Genii walk the mountain green ?  
Or heard, while other worlds their charms reveal,  
Soft music o'er the ærial summit steal ?  
While o'er the desert, answering every close,  
Rich steam of sweetest perfume comes and goes.  
—And sure there is a secret Power that reigns  
Here, where no trace of man the spot profanes,  
Nought but the *chalets*,<sup>2</sup> flat and bare, on high  
Suspended 'mid the quiet of the sky ;  
Or distant herds that pasturing upward creep,  
And, not untended, climb the dangerous steep.  
How still ! no irreligious sound or sight  
Rouses the soul from her severe delight.  
An idle voice the sabbath region fills  
Of Deep that calls to Deep across the hills,  
And with that voice accords the soothing sound  
Of drowsy bells, for ever tinkling round ;  
Faint wail of eagle melting into blue

<sup>1</sup> The people of this Canton are supposed to be of a more melancholy disposition than the other inhabitants of the Alps ; this, if true, may proceed from their living more secluded.

<sup>2</sup> This picture is from the middle region of the Alps. *Chalets* are summer huts for the Swiss herdsmen.

Beneath the cliffs, and pine-woods' steady *sugh*;<sup>1</sup>  
The solitary heifer's deepened low ;  
Or rumbling, heard remote, of falling snow.  
All motions, sounds, and voices, far and nigh,  
Blend in a music of tranquillity ;  
Save when, a stranger seen below, the boy  
Shouts from the echoing hills with savage joy.

When, from the sunny breast of open seas,  
And bays with myrtle fringed, the southern breeze  
Comes on to gladden April with the sight  
Of green isles widening on each snow-clad height ;  
When shouts and lowing herds the valley fill,  
And louder torrents stun the noon-tide hill,  
The pastoral Swiss begin the cliffs to scale,  
Leaving to silence the deserted vale ;  
And like the Patriarchs in their simple age  
Move, as the verdure leads, from stage to stage :  
High and more high in summer's heat they go,  
And hear the rattling thunder far below ;  
Or steal beneath the mountains, half-deterred,  
Where huge rocks tremble to the bellowing herd.

One I behold who, 'cross the foaming flood,  
Leaps with a bound of graceful hardihood ;  
Another, high on that green ledge ;—he gained  
The tempting spot with every sinew strained ;  
And downward thence a knot of grass he throws,  
Food for his beasts in time of winter snows.  
—Far different life from what Tradition hoar  
Transmits of happier lot in times of yore !  
Then Summer lingered long ; and honey flowed  
From out the rocks, the wild bees' safe abode :  
Continual waters welling cheered the waste,  
And plants were wholesome, now of deadly taste :  
Nor Winter yet his frozen stores had piled,  
Usurping where the fairest herbage smiled :  
Nor Hunger driven the herds from pastures bare,  
To climb the treacherous cliffs for scanty fare.  
Then the milk-thistle flourished through the land,  
And forced the full-swoln udder to demand,  
Thrice every day, the pail and welcome hand.  
Thus does the father to his children tell  
Of banished bliss, by fancy loved too well.

<sup>1</sup> "Sugh," a Scotch word expressive of the sound of the wind through the trees.

Alas ! that human guilt provoked the rod  
Of angry Nature to avenge her God.  
Still, Nature, ever just, to him imparts  
Joys only given to uncorrupted hearts.

'Tis morn : with gold the verdant mountain glows  
More high, the snowy peaks with hues of rose.  
Far-stretched beneath the many-tinted hills,  
A mighty waste of mist the valley fills,  
A solemn sea ! whose billows wide around  
Stand motionless, to awful silence bound :  
Pines, on the coast, through mist their tops uprear,  
That like to leaning masts of stranded ships appear.  
A single chasm, a gulf of gloomy blue,  
Gapes in the centre of the sea—and, through  
That dark mysterious gulf ascending, sound  
Innumerable streams with roar profound.  
Mount through the nearer vapours notes of birds,  
And merry flageolet ; the low of herds,  
The bark of dogs, the heifer's tinkling bell,  
Talk, laughter, and perchance a church-tower knell :  
Think not, the peasant from aloft has gazed  
And heard with heart unmoved, with soul unraised :  
Nor is his spirit less enrapt, nor less  
Alive to independent happiness,  
Then, when he lies, out-stretched, at eventide  
Upon the fragrant mountain's purple side :  
For as the pleasures of his simple day  
Beyond his native valley seldom stray,  
Nought round its darling precincts can he find  
But brings some past enjoyment to his mind ;  
While Hope, reclining upon Pleasure's urn,  
Binds her wild wreaths, and whispers his return.

Once, Man entirely free, alone and wild,  
Was blest as free—for he was Nature's child.  
He, all superior but his God disdained,  
Walked none restraining, and by none restrained  
Confessed no law but what his reason taught,  
Did all he wished, and wished but what he ought.  
As man in his primeval dower arrayed  
The image of his glorious Sire displayed,  
Even so, by faithful Nature guarded, here  
The traces of primeval Man appear ;  
The simple dignity no forms debase ;  
The eye sublime, and surly lion-grace :  
The slave of none, of beasts alone the lord,

His book he prizes, nor neglects his sword ;  
Well taught by that to feel his rights, prepared  
With this "the blessings he enjoys to guard."

And, as his native hills encircle ground  
For many a marvellous victory renowned,  
The work of Freedom daring to oppose,  
With few in arms,<sup>1</sup> innumerable foes,  
When to those famous fields his steps are led,  
An unknown power connects him with the dead :  
For images of other worlds are there ;  
Awful the light, and holy is the air.  
Fitfully, and in flashes, through his soul,  
Like sun-lit tempests, troubled transports roll ;  
His bosom heaves, his Spirit towers amain,  
Beyond the senses and their little reign.

And oft, when that dread vision hath past by,  
He holds with God himself communion high,  
There where the peal of swelling torrents fills  
The sky-roofed temple of the eternal hills ;  
Or when, upon the mountain's silent brow  
Reclined, he sees, above him and below,  
Bright stars of ice and azure fields of snow ;  
While needle peaks of granite shooting bare  
Tremble in ever-varying tints of air.  
And when a gathering weight of shadows brown  
Falls on the valleys as the sun goes down ;  
And Pikes, of darkness named and fear and storms,<sup>2</sup>  
Uplift in quiet their illumined forms,  
In sea-like reach of prospect round him spread,  
Tinged like an angel's smile all rosy red—  
Awe in his breast with holiest love unites,  
And the near heavens impart their own delights.

When downward to his winter hut he goes,  
Dear and more dear the lessening circle grows ;  
That hut which on the hills so oft employs  
His thoughts, the central point of all his joys.

<sup>1</sup> Alluding to several battles which the Swiss in very small numbers have gained over their oppressors, the house of Austria ; and in particular, to one fought at Nœffels near Glarus, where three hundred and thirty men are said to have defeated an army of between fifteen and twenty thousand Austrians. Scattered over the valley are to be found eleven stones, with this inscription, 1388, the year the battle was fought, marking out, as I was told upon the spot, the several places where the Austrians, attempting to make a stand, were repulsed anew.

<sup>2</sup> As Schreck-Horn, the pike of terror ; Wetter-Horn, the pike of storms, etc., etc.

And as a swallow, at the hour of rest,  
Peeps often ere she darts into her nest,  
So to the homestead, where the grandsire tends  
A little prattling child, he oft descends,  
To glance a look upon the well-matched pair ;  
Till storm and driving ice blockade him there.  
There, safely guarded by the woods behind,  
He hears the chiding of the baffled wind,  
Hears Winter calling all his terrors round,  
And, blest within himself, he shrinks not from the sound.

Through Nature's vale his homely pleasures glide,  
Unstained by envy, discontent, and pride ;  
The bound of all his vanity, to deck,  
With one bright bell, a favourite heifer's neck ;  
Well pleased upon some simple annual feast,  
Remembered half the year and hoped the rest,  
If dairy-produce, from his inner hoard,  
Of thrice ten summers dignify the board.  
—Alas ! in every clime a flying ray

Is all we have to cheer our wintry way ;  
And here the unwilling mind may more than trace  
The general sorrows of the human race ;  
The churlish gales of penury, that blow  
Cold as the north-wind o'er a waste of snow,  
To them the gentle groups of bliss deny  
That on the noon-day bank of leisure lie.  
Yet more ;—compelled by Powers which only deign  
That *solitary* man disturb their reign,  
Powers that support an unremitting strife  
With all the tender charities of life,  
Full oft the father, when his sons have grown  
To manhood, seems their title to disown ;  
And from his nest amid the storms of heaven  
Drives, eagle-like, those sons as he was driven ;  
With stern composure watches to the plain—  
And never, eagle-like, beholds again !

When long-familiar joys are all resigned,  
Why does their sad remembrance haunt the mind ?  
Lo ! where through flat Batavia's willowy groves,  
Or by the lazy Seine, the exile roves ;  
O'er the curled waters Alpine measures swell,  
And search the affections to their inmost cell ;  
Sweet poison spreads along the listener's veins,  
Turning past pleasures into mortal pains ;  
Poison, which not a frame of steel can brave,

Bows his young head with sorrow to the grave.<sup>1</sup>

Gay lark of hope, thy silent song resume !  
 Ye flattering eastern lights, once more the hills illumine !  
 Fresh gales and dews of life's delicious morn,  
 And thou, lost fragrance of the heart, return !  
 Alas ! the little joy to man allowed  
 Fades like the lustre of an evening cloud ;  
 Or like the beauty in a flower installed,  
 Whose season was, and cannot be recalled.  
 Yet, when opprest by sickness, grief, or care,  
 And taught that pain is pleasure's natural heir,  
 We still confide in more than we can know ;  
 Death would be else the favourite friend of woe.

'Mid savage rocks, and seas of snow that shine,  
 Between interminable tracts of pine,  
 Within a temple stands an awful shrine,  
 By an uncertain light revealed, that falls  
 On the mute Image and the troubled walls.  
 Oh ! give not me that eye of hard disdain  
 That views, undimmed, Einsiedlen's<sup>2</sup> wretched fane.  
 While ghastly faces through the gloom appear,  
 Abortive joy, and hope that works in fear ;  
 While prayer contends with silenced agony,  
 Surely in other thoughts contempt may die.  
 If the sad grave of human ignorance bear  
 One flower of hope—oh, pass and leave it there !

The tall sun, pausing on an Alpine spire,  
 Flings o'er the wilderness a stream of fire :  
 Now meet we other pilgrims ere the day  
 Close on the remnant of their weary way ;  
 While they are drawing toward the sacred floor  
 Where, so they fondly think, the worm shall gnaw no more.  
 How gaily murmur and how sweetly taste  
 The fountains<sup>3</sup> reared for them amid the waste !  
 Their thirst they slake :—they wash their toil-worn feet  
 And some with tears of joy each other greet.  
 Yes, I must see you when ye first behold  
 Those holy turrets tipped with evening gold,

<sup>1</sup> The well-known effect of the famous air, called in French *Ranz des Vaches*, upon the Swiss troops.

<sup>2</sup> This shrine is resorted to, from a hope of relief, by multitudes, from every corner of the Catholic world, labouring under mental or bodily afflictions.

<sup>3</sup> Rude fountains built and covered with sheds for the accommodation of the Pilgrims, in their ascent of the mountain.

In that glad moment will for you a sigh  
Be heaved, of charitable sympathy ;  
In that glad moment when your hands are prest  
In mute devotion on the thankful breast !

Last, let us turn to Chamouny that shields  
With rocks and gloomy woods her fertile fields :  
Five streams of ice amid her cots descend,  
And with wild flowers and blooming orchards blend ;—  
A scene more fair than what the Grecian feigns  
Of purple lights and ever-vernal plains ;  
Here all the seasons revel hand in hand :  
'Mid lawns and shades by breezy rivulets fanned,  
They sport beneath that mountain's matchless height  
That holds no commerce with the summer night.  
From age to age, throughout his lonely bounds  
The crash of ruin fitfully resounds ;  
Appalling havoc ! but serene his brow,  
Where daylight lingers on perpetual snow ;  
Glitter the stars above, and all is black below.

What marvel then if many a Wanderer sigh,  
While roars the sullen Arve in anger by,  
That not for thy reward, unrivalled Vale !  
Waves the ripe harvest in the autumnal gale ;  
That thou, the slave of slaves, art doomed to pine  
And droop while no Italian arts are thine,  
To soothe or cheer, to soften or refine.

Hail Freedom ! whether it was mine to stray,  
With shrill winds whistling round my lonely way,  
On the bleak sides of Cumbria's heath-clad moors,  
Or where dank sea-weed lashes Scotland's shores ;  
To scent the sweets of Piedmont's breathing rose,  
And orange gale that o'er Lugano blows ;  
Still have I found, where Tyranny prevails,  
That virtue languishes and pleasure fails,  
While the remotest hamlets blessings share  
In thy loved presence known, and only there ;  
*Heart* blessings—outward treasures too which the eye  
Of the sun peeping through the clouds can spy,  
And every passing breeze will testify.  
There, to the porch, belike with jasmine bound  
Or woodbine wreaths, a smoother path is wound ;  
The housewife there a brighter garden sees,  
Where hum on busier wing her happy bees ;  
On infant cheeks there fresher roses blow ;  
And grey-haired men look up with livelier brow,—

To greet the traveller needing food and rest ;  
Housed for the night, or but a half-hour's guest.

And oh, fair France ! though now the traveller sees  
Thy three-striped banner fluctuate on the breeze ;  
Though martial songs have banished songs of love,  
And nightingales desert the village grove,  
Scared by the life and rumbling drum's alarms,  
And the short thunder, and the flash of arms ;  
That cease not till night falls, when far and nigh,  
Sole sound, the Sourd<sup>1</sup> prolongs his mournful cry !  
—Yet, hast thou found that Freedom spreads her power  
Beyond the cottage-hearth, the cottage-door :  
All nature smiles, and owns beneath her eyes  
Her fields peculiar, and peculiar skies.  
Yes, as I roamed where Loiret's waters glide  
Through rustling aspens heard from side to side,  
When from October clouds a milder light  
Fell where the blue flood rippled into white ;  
Methought from every cot the watchful bird  
Crowed with ear-piercing power till then unheard ;  
Each clacking mill, that broke the murmuring streams,  
Rocked the charmed thought in more delightful dreams ;  
Chasing those pleasant dreams, the falling leaf  
Awoke a fainter sense of moral grief ;  
The measured echo of the distant fall  
Wound in more welcome cadence down the vale ;  
With more majestic course<sup>2</sup> the water rolled,  
And ripening foliage shone with richer gold.  
—But foes are gathering—Liberty must raise  
Red on the hills her beacon's far-seen blaze ;  
Must bid the tocsin ring from tower to tower !—  
Nearer and nearer comes the trying hour !  
Rejoice, brave Land, though pride's perverted ire  
Rouse hell's own aid, and wrap thy fields in fire :  
Lo, from the flames a great and glorious birth ;  
As if a new-made heaven were hailing a new earth !  
—All cannot be : the promise is too fair  
For creatures doomed to breathe terrestrial air :  
Yet not for this will sober reason frown  
Upon that promise, nor the hope disown ;

<sup>1</sup> An insect so called, which emits a short, melancholy cry, heard at the close of the summer evenings, on the banks of the Loire.

<sup>2</sup> The duties upon many parts of the French rivers were so exorbitant, that the poorer people, deprived of the benefit of water carriage, were obliged to transport their goods by land.

She knows that only from high aims ensue  
Rich guerdons, and to them alone are due.

Great God ! by whom the strifes of men are weighed  
In an impartial balance, give thine aid  
To the just cause ; and, oh ! do thou preside  
Over the mighty stream now spreading wide :  
So shall its waters, from the heavens supplied  
In copious showers, from earth by wholesome springs,  
Brood o'er the long-parched lands with Nile-like wings !  
And grant that every sceptred child of clay  
Who cries presumptuous, "Here the flood shall stay,"  
May in its progress see thy guiding hand,  
And cease the acknowledged purpose to withstand ;  
Or, swept in anger from the insulted shore,  
Sink with his servile bands, to rise no more !

To-night, my Friend, within this humble cot  
Be scorn and fear and hope alike forgot  
In timely sleep ; and when, at break of day,  
On the tall peaks the glistening sunbeams play,  
With a light heart our course we may renew,  
The first whose footsteps print the mountain dew.  
(1793)

## GUILT AND SORROW

OR, INCIDENTS UPON SALISBURY PLAIN<sup>1</sup>

(I)

1

A TRAVELLER on the skirt of Sarum's Plain  
Pursued his vagrant way, with feet half bare ;  
Stooping his gait, but not as if to gain  
Help from the staff he bore ; for mien and air  
Were hardy, though his cheek seemed worn with care  
Both of the time to come, and time long fled :  
Down fell in straggling locks his thin grey hair ;  
A coat he wore of military red  
But faded, and stuck o'er with many a patch and shred.

<sup>1</sup> Unwilling to be unnecessarily particular, I have assigned this poem to the dates 1793 and '94 ; but in fact much of the "Female Vagrant's" story was composed at least two years before.

\* "The Female Vagrant," as originally printed, forms the second part of the present poem, which begins with stanza xxiii, *q. v.*—*Ed.*

## II

While thus he journeyed, step by step led on,  
He saw and passed a stately inn, full sure  
That welcome in such house for him was none.  
No board inscribed the needy to allure  
Hung there, no bush proclaimed to old and poor  
And desolate, "Here you will find a friend!"  
The pendent grapes glittered above the door;—  
On he must pace, perchance 'till night descend,  
*Where'er the dreary roads their bare white lines extend.*

## III

The gathering clouds grow red with stormy fire,  
In streaks diverging wide and mounting high;  
That inn he long had passed; the distant spire,  
Which oft as he looked back had fixed his eye,  
Was lost, though still he looked, in the blank sky.  
Perplexed and comfortless he gazed around,  
And scarce could any trace of man descry,  
Save cornfields stretched and stretching without bound;  
But where the sower dwelt was nowhere to be found.

## IV

No tree was there, no meadow's pleasant green,  
No brook to wet his lip or soothe his ear;  
Long files of corn-stacks here and there were seen,  
But not one dwelling-place his heart to cheer.  
Some labourer, thought he, may perchance be near;  
And so he sent a feeble shout—in vain;  
No voice made answer, he could only hear  
Winds rustling over plots of unripe grain,  
Or whistling thro' thin grass along the unfurrowed plain.

## V

Long had he fancied each successive slope  
Concealed some cottage, whither he might turn  
And rest; but now along heaven's darkening cope  
The crows rushed by in eddies, homeward borne.  
Thus warned he sought some shepherd's spreading thorn  
Or hovel from the storm to shield his head,  
But sought in vain; for now, all wild, forlorn,  
And vacant, a huge waste around him spread;  
The wet cold ground, he feared, must be his only bed.

VI

And be it so—for to the chill night shower  
And the sharp wind his head he oft hath bared ;  
A Sailor he, who many a wretched hour  
Hath told ; for, landing after labour hard,  
Full long endured in hope of just reward,  
He to an armed fleet was forced away  
By seamen, who perhaps themselves had shared  
Like fate ; was hurried off, a helpless prey,  
'Gainst all that in *his* heart, or theirs perhaps, said nay.

VII

For years the work of carnage did not cease,  
And death's dire aspect daily he surveyed,  
Death's minister ; then came his glad release,  
And hope returned, and pleasure fondly made  
Her dwelling in his dreams. By Fancy's aid  
The happy husband flies, his arms to throw  
Round his wife's neck ; the prize of victory laid  
In her full lap, he sees such sweet tears flow  
As if thenceforth nor pain nor trouble she could know.

VIII

Vain hope ! for fraud took all that he had earned.  
The lion roars and gluts his tawny brood  
Even in the desert's heart ; but he, returned,  
Bears not to those he loves their needful food.  
His home approaching, but in such a mood  
That from his sight his children might have run.  
He met a traveller, robbed him, shed his blood ;  
And when the miserable work was done  
He fled, a vagrant since, the murderer's fate to shun.

IX

From that day forth no place to him could be  
So lonely, but that thence might come a pang  
Brought from without to inward misery.  
Now, as he plodded on, with sullen clang  
A sound of chains along the desert rang ;  
He looked, and saw upon a gibbet high  
A human body that in irons swang,  
Uplifted by the tempest whirling by ;  
And, hovering, round it often did a raven fly.

## X

It was a spectacle which none might view,  
In spot so savage, but with shuddering pain ;  
Nor only did for him at once renew  
All he had feared from man, but roused a train  
Of the mind's phantoms, horrible as vain.  
The stones, as if to cover him from day,  
Rolled at his back along the living plain ;  
He fell, and without sense or motion lay ;  
But, when the trance was gone, feebly pursued his way.

## XI

As one whose brain habitual phrensy fires  
Owes to the fit in which his soul hath tossed  
Profounder quiet, when the fit retires,  
Even so the dire phantasma which had crossed  
His sense, in sudden vacancy quite lost,  
Left his mind still as a deep evening stream.  
Nor, if accosted now, in thought engrossed,  
*Moody, or inly troubled, would he seem*  
To traveller who might talk of any casual theme.

## XII

Hurtle the clouds in deeper darkness piled,  
Gone is the raven timely rest to seek ;  
He seemed the only creature in the wild  
On whom the elements their rage might wreak ;  
Save that the bustard, of those regions bleak  
Shy tenant, seeing by the uncertain light  
A man there wandering, gave a mournful shriek,  
And half upon the ground, with strange affright,  
Forced hard against the wind a thick unwieldy flight.

## XIII

All, all was cheerless to the horizon's bound ;  
The weary eye—which, wheresoe'er it strays,  
Marks nothing but the red sun's setting round,  
Or on the earth strange lines, in former days  
Left by gigantic arms—at length surveys  
What seems an antique castle spreading wide ;  
Hoary and naked are its walls, and raise  
Their brow sublime : in shelter there to bide  
He turned, while rain poured down smoking on every side.

XIV

Pile of Stone-henge! so proud to hint yet keep  
Thy secrets, thou that lov'st to stand and hear  
The Plain resounding to the whirlwind's sweep,  
Inmate of lonesome Nature's endless year;  
Even if thou saw'st the giant wicker rear  
For sacrifice its throngs of living men,  
Before thy face did ever wretch appear,  
Who in his heart had groaned with deadlier pain  
Than he who, tempest-driven, thy shelter now would gain.

XV

Within that fabric of mysterious form,  
Winds met in conflict, each by turns supreme;  
And, from the perilous ground dislodged, through storm  
And rain, he wildered on, no moon to stream  
From gulf of parting clouds one friendly beam,  
Nor any friendly sound his footsteps led;  
Once did the lightning's faint disastrous gleam  
Disclose a naked guide-post's double head,  
Sight which tho' lost at once a gleam of pleasure shed.

XVI

No swinging sign-board creaked from cottage elm  
To stay his steps with faintness overcome;  
'Twas dark and void as ocean's watery realm  
Roaring with storms beneath night's starless gloom;  
No gipsy cowered o'er fire of furze or broom;  
No labourer watched his red kiln glaring bright,  
Nor taper glimmered dim from sick man's room;  
Along the waste no line of mournful light  
From lamp of lonely toll-gate streamed athwart the night.

XVII

At length, though hid in clouds, the moon arose;  
The downs were visible—and now revealed  
A structure stands, which two bare slopes enclose.  
It was a spot, where, ancient vows fulfilled,  
Kind pious hands did to the Virgin build  
A lonely Spital, the belated swain  
From the night terrors of that waste to shield;  
But there no human being could remain,  
And now the walls are named the "Dead House" of the  
plain.

## XVIII

Though he had little cause to love the abode  
Of man, or covet sight of mortal face,  
Yet when faint beams of light that ruin showed,  
How glad he was at length to find some trace  
Of human shelter in that dreary place.  
Till to his flock the early shepherd goes,  
Here shall much-needed sleep his frame embrace.  
In a dry nook where fern the floor bestrows  
He lays his stiffened limbs,—his eyes begin to close ;

## XIX

When hearing a deep sigh, that seemed to come  
From one who mourned in sleep, he raised his head,  
And saw a woman in the naked room  
Outstretched, and turning on a restless bed :  
The moon a wan dead light around her shed.  
He waked her—spake in tone that would not fail,  
He hoped, to calm her mind ; but ill he sped,  
For of that ruin she had heard a tale  
Which now with freezing thoughts did all her powers assail ;

## XX

Had heard of one who, forced from storms to shroud,  
Felt the loose walls of this decayed Retreat  
Rock to incessant neighings shrill and loud,  
While his horse pawed the floor with furious heat ;  
Till on a stone, that sparkled to his feet,  
Struck, and still struck again, the troubled horse :  
The man half raised the stone with pain and sweat,  
Half raised, for well his arm might lose its force  
Disclosing the grim head of a late murdered corse.

## XXI

Such tale of this lone mansion she had learned,  
And, when that shape, with eyes in sleep half drowned,  
By the moon's sullen lamp she first discerned,  
Cold stony horror all her senses bound.  
Her he addressed in words of cheering sound ;  
Recovering heart, like answer did she make ;  
And well it was that, of the corse there found,  
In converse that ensued she nothing spake ;  
She knew not what dire pangs in him such tale could wake.

## XXII

But soon his voice and words of kind intent  
 Banished that dismal thought; and now the wind  
 In fainter howlings told its *rage* was spent:  
 Meanwhile discourse ensued of various kind,  
 Which by degrees a confidence of mind  
 And mutual interest failed not to create.  
 And, to a natural sympathy resigned,  
 In that forsaken building where they sate  
 The Woman thus retraced her own untoward fate.

## (II)

XXIII<sup>1</sup>

"By Derwent's side my father dwelt—a man  
 Of virtuous life, by pious parents bred;  
 And I believe that, soon as I began  
 To lisp, he made me kneel beside my bed,  
 And in his hearing there my prayers I said:  
 And afterwards, by my good father taught,  
 I read, and loved the books in which I read;  
 For books in every neighbouring house I sought,  
 And nothing to my mind a sweeter pleasure brought.

## XXIV

"A little croft we owned—a plot of corn,  
 A garden stored with peas, and mint, and thyme,

<sup>1</sup> Here began the earlier poem, "The Female Vagrant," ending with stanza L. of the present text. The first two verses originally ran as follows:—

My Father was a good and pious man,  
 An honest man by honest parents bred,  
 And I believe that, soon as I began  
 To lisp, he made me kneel beside my bed,  
 And in his hearing there my prayers I said:  
 And afterwards, by my good father taught,  
 I read, and loved the books in which I read;  
 For books in every neighbouring house I sought,  
 And nothing to my mind a sweeter pleasure brought.  
 Can I forget what charms did once adorn  
 My garden, stored with pease, and mint, and thyme,  
 And rose, and lily, for the sabbath morn?  
 The sabbath bells, and their delightful chime;  
 The gambols and wild freaks at shearing time;  
 My hen's rich nest through long grass scarce espied;  
 The cowslip-gathering in June's dewy pride;  
 The swans, that, when I sought the water-side,  
 From far to meet me came, spreading their snowy pride?

And flowers for posies, oft on Sunday morn  
 Plucked while the church bells rang their earliest chime.  
 Can I forget our freaks at shearing time !  
 My hen's rich nest through long grass scarce espied ;  
 The cowslip-gathering in June's dewy prime ;  
 The swans that with white chests appeared in pride  
 Rushing and racing came to meet me at the water-side.

## XXV

"The staff I well remember which upbore  
 The bending body of my active sire ;  
 His seat beneath the honied sycamore  
 Where the bees hummed, and chair by winter fire ;  
 When market-morning came, the neat attire  
 With which, though bent on haste, myself I decked ;  
 Our watchful house-dog, that would tease and tire  
 The stranger till its barking-fit I checked ;  
 The red-breast, known for years, which at my casement  
 pecked.

## XXVI

"The suns of twenty summers danced along,—  
 Too little marked how fast they rolled away :  
 But, through severe mischance and cruel wrong,  
 My father's substance fell into decay :  
 We toiled and struggled, hoping for a day  
 When Fortune might put on a kinder look ;  
 But vain were wishes, efforts vain as they ;  
 He from his old hereditary nook  
 Must part ; the summons came ;—our final leave we took.

## XXVII

"It was indeed a miserable hour  
 When, from the last hill-top, my sire surveyed,  
 Peering above the trees, the steeple tower  
 That on his marriage day sweet music made !  
 Till then, he hoped his bones might there be laid  
 Close by my mother in their native bowers :  
 Bidding me trust in God, he stood and prayed ;—  
 I could not pray :—through tears that fell in showers  
 Glimmered our dear-loved home, alas ! no longer ours !

## XXVIII

"There was a Youth whom I had loved so long,  
 That when I loved him not I cannot say ;

'Mid the green mountains many a thoughtless song  
We two had sung, like gladsome birds in May;  
When we began to tire of childish play,  
We seemed still more and more to prize each other;  
We talked of marriage and our marriage day;  
And I in truth did love him like a brother,  
For never could I hope to meet with such another.

## XXIX

"Two years were passed since to a distant town  
He had repaired to ply a gainful trade:  
What tears of bitter grief, till then unknown!  
What tender vows, our last sad kiss delayed!  
To him we turned:—we had no other aid:  
Like one revived, upon his neck I wept;  
And her whom he had loved in joy, he said,  
He well could love in grief; his faith he kept;  
And in a quiet home once more my father slept.

## XXX

"We lived in peace and comfort; and were blest  
With daily bread, by constant toil supplied.  
Three lovely babes had lain upon my breast;  
And often, viewing their sweet smiles, I sighed,  
And knew not why. My happy father died,  
When threatened war reduced the children's meal:  
Thrice happy! that for him the grave could hide  
The empty loom, cold hearth, and silent wheel,  
And tears that flowed for ills which patience might not heal.

## XXXI

"'Twas a hard change; an evil time was come;  
We had no hope, and no relief could gain:  
But soon, with proud parade, the noisy drum  
Beat round to clear the streets of want and pain.  
My husband's arms now only served to strain  
Me and his children hungering in his view;  
In such dismay my prayers and tears were vain:  
To join those miserable men he flew,  
And now to the sea-coast, with numbers more, we drew.

## XXXII

"There were we long neglected, and we bore  
Much sorrow ere the fleet its anchor weighed;

Green fields before us, and our native shore,  
We breathed a pestilential air, that made  
Ravage for which no knell was heard. We prayed  
For our departure ; wished and wished—nor knew,  
'Mid that long sickness and those hopes delayed,  
That happier days we never more must view.  
The parting signal streamed—at last the land withdrew.

## XXXIII

" But the calm summer season now was past.  
On as we drove, the equinoctial deep  
Ran mountains high before the howling blast,  
And many perished in the whirlwind's sweep.  
We gazed with terror on their gloomy sleep,  
Untaught that soon such anguish must ensue,  
Our hopes such harvest of affliction reap,  
That we the mercy of the waves should rue :  
We reached the western world, a poor devoted crew.

## XXXIV

" The pains and plagues that on our heads came down,  
Disease and famine, agony and fear,  
In wood or wilderness, in camp or town,  
It would unman the firmest heart to hear.  
All perished—all in one remorseless year,  
Husband and children ! one by one, by sword  
And ravenous plague, all perished : every tear  
Dried up, despairing, desolate, on board  
A British ship I waked, as from a trance restored."

## XXXV

Here paused she of all present thought forlorn,  
Nor voice nor sound, that moment's pain expressed,  
Yet Nature, with excess of grief o'erborne,  
From her full eyes their watery load released.  
He too was mute ; and, ere her weeping ceased,  
He rose, and to the ruin's portal went,  
And saw the dawn opening the silvery east  
With rays of promise, north and southward sent ;  
And soon with crimson fire kindled the firmament.

## XXXVI

" O come," he cried, " come, after weary night  
Of such rough storm, this happy change to view."

So forth she came, and eastward looked ; the sight  
Over her brow like dawn of gladness threw ;  
Upon her cheek, to which its youthful hue  
Seemed to return, dried the last lingering tear,  
And from her grateful heart a fresh one drew :  
The whilst her comrade to her pensive cheer  
Tempered fit words of hope ; and the lark warbled near.

XXXVII

They looked and saw a lengthening road, and wain  
That rang down a bare slope not far remote :  
The barrows glistened bright with drops of rain,  
Whistled the waggoner with merry note,  
The cock far off sounded his clarion throat ;  
But town, or farm, or hamlet, none they viewed,  
Only were told there stood a lonely cot  
A long mile thence. While thither they pursued  
Their way, the Woman thus her mournful tale renewed.

XXXVIII

" Peaceful as this immeasurable plain  
Is now, by beams of dawning light imprest,  
In the calm sunshine slept the glittering main ;  
The very ocean hath its hour of rest.  
I too forgot the heavings of my breast.  
How quiet 'round me ship and ocean were !  
As quiet all within me. I was blest,  
And looked, and fed upon the silent air  
Until it seemed to bring a joy to my despair.

XXXIX

" Ah ! how unlike those late terrific sleeps,  
And groans that rage of racking famine spoke ;  
The unburied dead that lay in festering heaps,  
The breathing pestilence that rose like smoke,  
The shriek that from the distant battle broke,  
The mine's dire earthquake, and the pallid host  
Driven by the bomb's incessant thunder-stroke  
To loathsome vaults, where heart-sick anguish tossed,  
Hope died, and fear itself in agony was lost !

XL

" Some mighty gulf of separation past,  
I seemed transported to another world ;

A thought resigned with pain, when from the mast  
The impatient mariner the sail unfurled,  
And, whistling, called the wind that hardly curled  
The silent sea. From the sweet thoughts of home  
And from all hope I was for ever hurled.  
For me—farthest from earthly port to roam  
Was best, could I but shun the spot where man might come.

## XLI

"And oft I thought (my fancy was so strong)  
That I, at last, a resting-place had found ;  
'Here will I dwell,' said I, 'my whole life long,  
Roaming the illimitable waters round ;  
Here will I live, of all but heaven disowned,  
And end my days upon the peaceful flood.'—  
To break my dream the vessel reached its bound ;  
And homeless near a thousand homes I stood,  
And near a thousand tables pined and wanted food.

## XLII

"No help I sought ; in sorrow turned adrift,  
Was hopeless, as if cast on some bare rock ;  
Nor morsel to my mouth that day did lift,  
Nor raised my hand at any door to knock.  
I lay where, with his drowsy mates, the cock  
From the cross-timber of an out-house hung :  
Dismally tolled, that night, the city clock !  
At morn my sick heart hunger scarcely stung,  
Nor to the beggar's language could I fit my tongue.

## XLIII

"So passed a second day ; and, when the third  
Was come, I tried in vain the crowd's resort.  
—In deep despair, by frightful wishes stirred,  
Near the sea-side I reached a ruined fort ;  
There, pains which nature could no more support,  
With blindness linked, did on my vitals fall ;  
And, after many interruptions short  
Of hideous sense, I sank, nor step could crawl :  
Unsought for was the help that did my life recall.

## XLIV

"Borne to a hospital, I lay with brain  
Drowsy and weak, and shattered memory ;

I heard my neighbours in their beds complain  
Of many things which never troubled me—  
Of feet still bustling round with busy glee,  
Of looks where common kindness had no part,  
Of service done with cold formality,  
Fretting the fever round the languid heart,  
And groans which, as they said, might make a dead man  
start.

XLV

"These things just served to stir the slumbering sense,  
Nor pain nor pity in my bosom raised.  
With strength did memory return ; and, thence  
Dismissed, again on open day I gazed,  
At houses, men, and common light, amazed.  
The lanes I sought, and, as the sun retired,  
Came where beneath the trees a faggot blazed,  
The travellers saw me weep, my fate inquired,  
And gave me food—and rest, more welcome, more desired.

XLVI

"Rough potters seemed they, trading soberly  
With panniered asses driven from door to door ;  
But life of happier sort set forth to me,  
And other joys my fancy to allure—  
The bag-pipe dinning on the midnight moor  
In barn uplighted ; and companions boon,  
Well met from far with revelry secure  
Among the forest glades, while jocund June  
Rolled fast along the sky his warm and genial moon.

XLVII

"But ill they suited me—those journeys dark  
O'er moor and mountain, midnight theft to hatch !  
To charm the surly house-dog's faithful bark,  
Or hang on tip-toe at the lifted latch.  
The gloomy lantern, and the dim blue match,  
The black disguise, the warning whistle shrill,  
And ear still busy on its nightly watch,  
Were not for me, brought up in nothing ill :  
Besides, on griefs so fresh my thoughts were brooding still.

XLVIII

"What could I do, unaided and unblest ?  
My father ! gone was every friend of thine :

And kindred of dead husband are at best  
 Small help ; and, after marriage such as mine,  
 With little kindness would to me incline.  
 Nor was I then for toil or service fit ;  
 My deep-drawn sighs no effort could confine ;  
 In open air forgetful would I sit  
 Whole hours, with idle arms in moping sorrow knit.

## XLIX

"The roads I paced, I loitered through the fields ;  
 Contentedly, yet sometimes self-accused.  
 Trusted my life to what chance bounty yields,  
 Now coldly given, now utterly refused.  
 The ground I for my bed have often used :  
 But what afflicts my peace with keenest ruth,  
 Is that I have my inner self abused,  
 Foregone the home delight of constant truth,  
 And clear and open soul, so prized in fearless youth.

## L

"Through tears the rising sun I oft have viewed,  
 Through tears have seen him towards that world descend  
 Where my poor heart lost all its fortitude :  
 Three years a wanderer now my course I bend—  
 Oh ! tell me whither—for no earthly friend  
 Have I."—She ceased, and weeping turned away ;  
 As if because her tale was at an end,  
 She wept ; because she had no more to say  
 Of that perpetual weight which on her spirit lay.

## (III)

## LI

True sympathy the Sailor's looks expressed,  
 His looks—for pondering he was mute the while.  
 Of social Order's care for wretchedness,  
 Of Time's sure help to calm and reconcile,  
 Joy's second spring and Hope's long-treasured smile,  
 'Twas not for *him* to speak—a man so tried.  
 Yet, to relieve her heart, in friendly style  
 Proverbial words of comfort he applied,  
 And not in vain, while they went pacing side by side.

LII

Ere long, from heaps of turf, before their sight,  
Together smoking in the sun's slant beam,  
Rise various wreaths that into one unite  
Which high and higher mounts with silver gleam :  
Fair spectacle,—but instantly a scream  
Thence bursting shrill did all remark prevent ;  
They paused, and heard a hoarser voice blaspheme,  
And female cries. Their course they thither bent,  
And met a man who foamed with anger vehement.

LIII

A woman stood with quivering lips and pale,  
And, pointing to a little child that lay  
Stretched on the ground, began a piteous tale ;  
How in a simple freak of thoughtless play  
He had provoked his father, who straightway,  
As if each blow were deadlier than the last,  
Struck the poor innocent. Pallid with dismay  
The Soldier's Widow heard and stood aghast ;  
And stern looks on the man her grey-haired Comrade cast.

LIV

His voice with indignation rising high  
Such further deed in manhood's name forbade ;  
The peasant, wild in passion, made reply,  
With bitter insult and revilings sad ;  
Asked him in scorn what business there he had ;  
What kind of plunder he was hunting now ;  
The gallows would one day of him be glad ;—  
Though inward anguish damped the Sailor's brow,  
Yet calm he seemed as thoughts so poignant would allow.

LV

Softly he stroked the child, who lay outstretched  
With face to earth ; and, as the boy turned round  
His battered head, a groan the Sailor fetched  
As if he saw—there and upon that ground—  
Strange repetition of the deadly wound  
He had himself inflicted. Through his brain  
At once the griding iron passage found ;  
Deluge of tender thoughts then rushed amain,  
Nor could his sunken eyes the starting tear restrain.

## LVI

Within himself he said—What hearts have we !  
The blessing this a father gives his child !  
Yet happy thou, poor boy ! compared with me,  
Suffering not doing ill—fate far more mild.  
The stranger's looks and tears of wrath beguiled  
The father, and relenting thoughts awoke ;  
He kissed his son—so all was reconciled.  
Then, with a voice which inward trouble broke  
Ere to his lips it came, the Sailor them bespoke.

## LVII

"Bad is the world, and hard is the world's law  
Even for the man who wears the warmest fleece ;  
Much need have ye that time more closely draw  
The bond of nature, all unkindness cease,  
And that among so few there still be peace :  
Else can ye hope but with such numerous foes  
Your pains shall ever with your years increase ?"—  
While from his heart the appropriate lesson flows,  
A correspondent calm stole gently o'er his woes.

## LVIII

Forthwith the pair passed on ; and down they look  
Into a narrow valley's pleasant scene  
Where wreaths of vapour tracked a winding brook,  
That babbled on through groves and meadows green ;  
A low-roofed house peeped out the trees between ;  
The dripping groves resound with cheerful lays,  
And melancholy lowings intervene  
Of scattered herds, that in the meadow graze,  
Some amid lingering shade, some touched by the sun's rays.

## LIX

They saw and heard, and, winding with the road,  
Down a thick wood, they dropt into the vale ;  
Comfort, by prouder mansions unbestowed,  
Their wearied frames, she hoped, would soon regale.  
Erelong they reached that cottage in the dale :  
It was a rustic inn ;—the board was spread,  
The milk-maid followed with her brimming pail,  
And lustily the master carved the bread,  
Kindly the housewife pressed, and they in comfort fed.

## LX

Their breakfast done, the pair, though loth, must part ;  
Wanderers whose course no longer now agrees.  
She rose and bade farewell ! and, while her heart  
Struggled with tears nor could its sorrow ease,  
She left him there ; for, clustering round his knees,  
With his oak-staff the cottage children played ;  
And soon she reached a spot o'erhung with trees  
And banks of ragged earth ; beneath the shade  
Across the pebbly road a little runnel strayed.

## LXI

A cart and horse beside the rivulet stood ;  
Chequering the canvas roof the sunbeams shone.  
She saw the carman bend to scoop the flood  
As the wain fronted her,—wherein lay one,  
A pale-faced Woman, in disease far gone.  
The carman wet her lips as well behoved ;  
Bed under her lean body there was none,  
Though even to die near one she most had loved  
She could not of herself those wasted limbs have moved.

## LXII

The Soldier's Widow learned with honest pain  
And homefelt force of sympathy sincere,  
Why thus that worn-out wretch must there sustain  
The jolting road and morning air severe.  
The wain pursued its way ; and following near  
In pure compassion she her steps retraced  
Far as the cottage. " A sad sight is here,"  
She cried aloud ; and forth ran out in haste  
The friends whom she had left but a few minutes past.

## LXIII

While to the door with eager speed they ran,  
From her bare straw the Woman half upraised  
Her bony visage—gaunt and deadly wan ;  
No pity asking, on the group she gazed  
With a dim eye, distracted and amazed ;  
Then sank upon her straw with feeble moan.  
Fervently cried the housewife—" God be praised,  
I have a house that I can call my own ;  
Nor shall she perish there, untended and alone !"

## LXIV

So in they bear her to the chimney seat,  
And busily, though yet with fear, untie  
Her garments, and, to warm her icy feet  
And chafe her temples, careful hands apply.  
Nature reviving, with a deep-drawn sigh  
She strove, and not in vain, her head to rear ;  
Then said—" I thank you all ; if I must die,  
The God in heaven my prayers for you will hear ;  
Till now I did not think my end had been so near.

## LXV

" Barred every comfort labour could procure,  
Suffering what no endurance could assuage,  
I was compelled to seek my father's door,  
Though loth to be a burthen on his age.  
But sickness stopped me in an early stage  
Of my sad journey ; and within the wain  
They placed me—there to end life's pilgrimage,  
Unless beneath your roof I may remain ;  
For I shall never see my father's door again.

## LXVI

" My life, Heaven knows, hath long been burthensome ;  
But, if I have not meekly suffered, meek  
May my end be ! Soon will this voice be dumb :  
Should child of mine e'er wander hither, speak  
Of me, say that the worm is on my cheek.—  
Torn from our hut, that stood beside the sea  
Near Portland lighthouse in a lonesome creek,  
My husband served in sad captivity  
On shipboard, bound till peace or death should set him free.

## LXVII

" A sailor's wife I knew a widow's cares,  
Yet two sweet little ones partook my bed ;  
Hope cheered my dreams, and to my daily prayers  
Our heavenly Father granted each day's bread ;  
Till one was found by stroke of violence dead,  
Whose body near our cottage chanced to lie ;  
A dire suspicion drove us from our shed ;  
In vain to find a friendly face we try,  
Nor could we live together those poor boys and I ;

LXVIII

"For evil tongues made oath how on that day  
My husband lurked about the neighbourhood ;  
Now he had fled, and whither none could say,  
And *he* had done the deed in the dark wood—  
Near his own home!—but he was mild and good ;  
Never on earth was gentler creature seen ;  
He'd not have robbed the raven of its food.  
My husband's lovingkindness stood between  
Me and all worldly harms and wrongs however keen."

LXIX

Alas ! the thing she told with labouring breath  
The Sailor knew too well. That wickedness  
His hand had wrought ; and when, in the hour of death,  
He saw his Wife's lips move his name to bless  
With her last words, unable to suppress  
His anguish, with his heart he ceased to strive ;  
And, weeping loud in this extreme distress,  
He cried—"Do pity me ! That thou shouldst live  
I neither ask nor wish—forgive me, but forgive !"

LXX

To tell the change that Voice within her wrought  
Nature by sign or sound made no essay ;  
A sudden joy surprised expiring thought,  
And every mortal pang dissolved away.  
Borne gently to a bed, in death she lay ;  
Yet still while over her the husband bent,  
A look was in her face which seemed to say,  
"Be blest ; by sight of thee from heaven was sent  
Peace to my parting soul, the fulness of content."

LXXI

*She* slept in peace,—his pulses throbbed and stopped,  
Breathless he gazed upon her face,—then took  
Her hand in his, and raised it, but both dropped,  
When on his own he cast a rueful look.  
His ears were never silent ; sleep forsook  
His burning eyelids stretched and stiff as lead ;  
All night from time to time under him shook  
The floor as he lay shuddering on his bed ;  
And oft he groaned aloud, "O God, that I were dead !"

## LXXII

The Soldier's Widow lingered in the cot,  
And, when he rose, he thanked her pious care  
Through which his Wife, to that kind shelter brought,  
Died in his arms ; and with those thanks a prayer  
He breathed for her, and for that merciful pair.  
The corse interred, not one hour he remained  
Beneath their roof, but to the open air  
A burthen, now with fortitude sustained,  
He bore within a breast where dreadful quiet reigned.

## LXXIII

Confirmed of purpose, fearlessly prepared  
For act and suffering, to the city straight  
He journeyed, and forthwith his crime declared :  
" And from your doom," he added, " now I wait,  
Nor let it linger long, the murderer's fate."  
Not ineffectual was that piteous claim :  
" O welcome sentence which will end though late,"  
He said, " the pangs that to my conscience came  
Out of that deed. My trust, Saviour ! is in thy name ! "

## LXXIV

His fate was pitied. Him in iron case  
(Reader, forgive the intolerable thought)  
They hung not :—no one on *his* form or face  
Could gaze, as on a show by idlers sought ;  
No kindred sufferer, to his death-place brought  
By lawless curiosity or chance,  
When into storm the evening sky is wrought,  
Upon his swinging corse an eye can glance,  
And drop, as he once dropped, in miserable trance.  
(1793-94)

PETER BELL<sup>1</sup>

## A TALE

What's in a *Name*?

Brutus will start a Spirit as soon as Cæsar!

## PROLOGUE

THERE's something in a flying horse,  
There's something in a huge balloon;  
But through the clouds I'll never float  
Until I have a little Boat,  
Shaped like the crescent-moon.

And now I *have* a little Boat  
In shape a very crescent-moon  
Fast through the clouds my boat can sail;  
But if perchance your faith should fail,  
Look up—and you shall see me soon!

The woods, my Friends, are round you roaring,  
Rocking and roaring like a sea;  
The noise of danger's in your ears,  
And ye have all a thousand fears  
Both for my little Boat and me!

Meanwhile untroubled I admire  
The pointed horns of my canoe;  
And, did not pity touch my breast,  
To see how ye are all distress,  
Till my ribs ached, I'd laugh at you!

Away we go, my Boat and I—  
Frail man ne'er sate in such another;  
Whether among the winds we strive,  
Or deep into the clouds we dive,  
Each is contented with the other.

<sup>1</sup> Written at Alfoxden. Founded upon an anecdote, which I read in a newspaper, of an ass being found hanging his head over a canal in a wretched posture. Upon examination a dead body was found in the water and proved to be the body of its master. The countenance, gait, and figure of Peter, were taken from a wild rover with whom I walked from Bulth, on the river Wye, downwards nearly as far as the town of Hay. He told me strange stories.

Away we go—and what care we  
For treasons, tumults, and for wars?  
We are as calm in our delight  
As is the crescent-moon so bright  
Among the scattered stars.

Up goes my Boat among the stars  
Through many a breathless field of light,  
Through many a long blue field of ether,  
Leaving ten thousand stars beneath her:  
Up goes my little Boat so bright!

The Crab, the Scorpion, and the Bull—  
We pry among them all; have shot  
High o'er the red-haired race of Mars,  
Covered from top to toe with scars;  
Such company I like it not!

The towns in Saturn are decayed,  
And melancholy Spectres throng them;—  
The Pleiads, that appear to kiss  
Each other in the vast abyss,  
With joy I sail among them.

Swift Mercury resounds with mirth,  
Great Jove is full of stately bowers;  
But these, and all that they contain,  
What are they to that tiny grain,  
That little Earth of ours?

Then back to Earth, the dear green Earth:—  
Whole ages if I here should roam,  
The world for my remarks and me  
Would not a whit the better be;  
I've left my heart at home.

See! there she is, the matchless Earth!  
There spreads the famed Pacific Ocean!  
Old Andes thrusts yon craggy spear  
Through the grey clouds; the Alps are here,  
Like waters in commotion!

Yon tawny slip is Libya's sands;  
That silver thread the river Dnieper!  
And look, where clothed in brightest green  
Is a sweet Isle, of isles the Queen;  
Ye fairies, from all evil keep her!

And see the town where I was born !  
Around those happy fields we span  
In boyish gambols ;—I was lost  
Where I have been, but on this coast  
I feel I am a man.

Never did fifty things at once  
Appear so lovely, never, never ;—  
How tunelessly the forests ring !  
To hear the earth's soft murmuring  
Thus could I hang for ever !

" Shame on you ! " cried my little Boat,  
" Was ever such a homesick Loon,  
Within a living Boat to sit,  
And make no better use of it ;  
A Boat twin-sister of the crescent-moon !

" Ne'er in the breast of full-grown Poet  
Fluttered so faint a heart before ;—  
Was it the music of the spheres  
That overpowered your mortal ears ?  
—Such din shall trouble them no more.

" These nether precincts do not lack  
Charms of their own ;—then come with me ;  
I want a comrade, and for you  
There's nothing that I would not do ;  
Nought is there that you shall not see.

" Haste ! and above Siberian snows  
We'll sport amid the boreal morning ;  
Will mingle with her lustres gliding  
Among the stars, the stars now hiding,  
And now the stars adorning.

" I know the secrets of a land  
Where human foot did never stray ;  
Fair is that land as evening skies,  
And cool, though in the depth it lies  
Of burning Africa.

" Or we'll into the realm of Faery,  
Among the lovely shades of things ;  
The shadowy forms of mountains bare,  
And streams, and bowers, and ladies fair,  
The shades of palaces and kings !

"Or, if you thirst with hardy zeal  
Less quiet regions to explore,  
Prompt voyage shall to you reveal  
How earth and heaven are taught to feel  
The might of magic lore!"

"My little vagrant Form of light,  
My gay and beautiful Canoe,  
Well have you played your friendly part;  
As kindly take what from my heart  
Experience forces—then adieu!"

"Temptation lurks among your words;  
But, while these pleasures you're pursuing  
Without impediment or let,  
No wonder if you quite forget  
What on the earth is doing.

"There was a time when all mankind  
Did listen with a faith sincere  
To tuneful tongues in mystery versed;  
*Then* Poets fearlessly rehearsed  
The wonders of a wild career.

'Go—(but the world's a sleepy world,  
And 'tis, I fear, an age too late)  
Take with you some ambitious Youth!  
For, restless Wanderer! I, in truth,  
Am all unfit to be your mate.

"Long have I loved what I behold,  
The night that calms, the day that cheers;  
The common growth of mother-earth  
Suffices me—her tears, her mirth,  
Her humblest mirth and tears.

"The dragon's wing, the magic ring,  
I shall not covet for my dower,  
If I along that lowly way  
With sympathetic heart may stray,  
And with a soul of power.

"These given, what more need I desire  
To stir, to soothe, or elevate?  
What nobler marvels than the mind  
May in life's daily prospect find,  
May find or there create?"

"A potent wand doth Sorrow wield;  
What spell so strong as guilty Fear!  
Repentance is a tender Sprite;  
If aught on earth have heavenly might,  
'Tis lodged within her silent tear.

"But grant my wishes,—let us now  
Descend from this ethereal height;  
Then take thy way, adventurous Skiff,  
More daring far than Hippogriff,  
And be thy own delight!

"To the stone-table in my garden,  
Loved haunt of many a summer hour,  
The Squire is come: his daughter Bess  
Beside him in the cool recess  
Sits blooming like a flower.

"With these are many more convened;  
They know not I have been so far;—  
I see them there, in number nine,  
Beneath the spreading Weymouth-pine!  
I see them—there they are!

"There sits the Vicar and his Dame;  
And there my good friend, Stephen Otter,  
And, ere the light of evening fail,  
To them I must relate the Tale  
Of Peter Bell the Potter."

Off flew the Boat—away she flees,  
Spurning her freight with indignation!  
And I, as well as I was able,  
On two poor legs, toward my stone-table  
Limped on with sore vexation.

"O, here he is!" cried little Bess—  
She saw me at the garden-door;  
"We've waited anxiously and long,"  
They cried, and all around me throng,  
Full nine of them or more!

"Reproach me not—your fears be still—  
Be thankful we again have met;—  
Resume, my Friends! within the shade  
Your seats, and quickly shall be paid  
The well-remembered debt."

I spake with faltering voice, like one  
 Not wholly rescued from the pale  
 Of a wild dream, or worse illusion ;  
 But, straight, to cover my confusion,  
 Began the promised Tale.

## PART FIRST

ALL by the moonlight river side  
 Groaned the poor Beast—alas ! in vain ;  
 The staff was raised to loftier height,  
 And the blows fell with heavier weight  
 As Peter struck—and struck again.

"Hold !" cried the Squire, "against the rules  
 Of common sense you're surely sinning ;  
 This leap is for us all too bold ;  
 Who Peter was, let that be told,  
 And start from the beginning."

—"A Potter,<sup>1</sup> Sir, he was by trade,"  
 Said I, becoming quite collected ;  
 "And wheresoever he appeared,  
 Full twenty times was Peter feared  
 For once that Peter was respected.

"He, two-and-thirty years or more,  
 Had been a wild and woodland rover ;  
 Had heard the Atlantic surges roar  
 On farthest Cornwall's rocky shore,  
 And trod the cliffs of Dover.

"And he had seen Caernarvon's towers,  
 And well he knew the spire of Sarum ;  
 And he had been where Lincoln bell  
 Flings o'er the fen that ponderous knell—  
 A far-renowned alarum !

"At Doncaster, at York, and Leeds,  
 And merry Carlisle had he been ;  
 And all along the Lowlands fair,  
 All through the bonny shire of Ayr  
 And far as Aberdeen.

<sup>1</sup> In the dialect of the North, a hawker of earthenware is thus designated.

"And he had been at Inverness ;  
And Peter, by the mountain-rills,  
Had danced his round with Highland lasses ;  
And he had lain beside his asses  
On lofty Cheviot Hills :

"And he had trudged through Yorkshire dales,  
Among the rocks and winding *scars* ;  
Where deep and low the hamlets lie  
Beneath their little patch of sky  
And little lot of stars :

"And all along the indented coast,  
Bespattered with the salt-sea foam ;  
Where'er a knot of houses lay  
On headland, or in hollow bay ;—  
Sure never man like him did roam !

"As well might Peter, in the Fleet,  
Have been fast bound, a begging debtor ;—  
He travelled here, he travelled there ;—  
But not the value of a hair  
Was heart or head the better.

"He roved among the vales and streams,  
In the green wood and hollow dell ;  
They were his dwellings night and day,—  
But nature ne'er could find the way  
Into the heart of Peter Bell.

"In vain, through every changeful year,  
Did Nature lead him as before ;  
A primrose by a river's brim  
A yellow primrose was to him,  
And it was nothing more.

"Small change it made on Peter's heart  
To see his gentle panniered train  
With more than vernal pleasure feeding,  
Where'er the tender grass was leading  
Its earliest green along the lane.

"In vain, through water, earth, and air  
The soul of happy sound was spread,  
When Peter on some April morn,  
Beneath the broom or budding thorn,  
Made the warm earth his lazy bed.



"At noon, when, by the forest's edge  
He lay beneath the branches high,  
The soft blue sky did never melt  
Into his heart; he never felt  
The witchery of the soft blue sky!

"On a fair prospect some have looked  
And felt, as I have heard them say,  
As if the moving time had been  
A thing as steadfast as the scene  
On which they gazed themselves away.

"Within the breast of Peter Bell  
These silent raptures found no place;  
He was a Carl as wild and rude  
As ever hue-and-cry pursued,  
As ever ran a felon's race.

"Of all that lead a lawless life,  
Of all that love their lawless lives,  
In city or in village small,  
He was the wildest far of all;—  
He had a dozen wedded wives.

"Nay, start not!—wedded wives—and twelve!  
But how one wife could e'er come near him,  
In simple truth I cannot tell;  
For, be it said of Peter Bell,  
To see him was to fear him.

"Though Nature could not touch his heart  
By lovely forms, and silent weather,  
And tender sounds, yet you might see  
At once, that Peter Bell and she  
Had often been together.

"A savage wildness round him hung  
As of a dweller out of doors;  
In his whole figure and his mien  
A savage character was seen  
Of mountains and of dreary moors.

"To all the unshaped half-human thoughts  
Which solitary Nature feeds  
'Mid summer storms or winter's ice,  
Had Peter joined whatever vice  
The cruel city breeds.

"His face was keen as is the wind  
That cuts along the hawthorn-fence ;—  
Of courage you saw little there,  
But, in its stead, a medley air  
Of cunning and of impudence.

"He had a dark and sidelong walk,  
And long and slouching was his gait ;  
Beneath his looks so bare and bold,  
You might perceive, his spirit cold  
Was playing with some inward bait.

"His forehead wrinkled was and furred ;  
A work, one half of which was done  
By thinking of his '*whens*' and '*how's* ;'  
And half, by knitting of his brows  
Beneath the glaring sun.

"There was a hardness in his cheek,  
There was a hardness in his eye,  
As if the man had fixed his face,  
In many a solitary place,  
Against the wind and open sky !"

ONE NIGHT, (and now, my little Bess !  
We've reached at last the promised Tale :)  
One beautiful November night,  
When the full moon was shining bright  
Upon the rapid river Swale,

Along the river's winding banks  
Peter was travelling all alone ;—  
Whether to buy or sell, or led  
By pleasure running in his head,  
To me was never known.

He trudged along through copse and brake,  
He trudged along o'er hill and dale ;  
Nor for the moon cared he a tittle,  
And for the stars he cared as little,  
And for the murmuring river Swale.

But, chancing to espy a path  
That promised to cut short the way  
As many a wiser man hath done,  
He left a trusty guide for one  
That might his steps betray.

To a thick wood he soon is brought  
Where cheerily his course he weaves,  
And whistling loud may yet be heard,  
Though often buried, like a bird  
Darkling, among the boughs and leaves.

But quickly Peter's mood is changed,  
And on he drives with cheeks that burn  
In downright fury and in wrath ;—  
There's little sign the treacherous path  
Will to the road return !

The path grows dim, and dimmer still ;  
Now up, now down, the Rover wends,  
With all the sail that he can carry,  
Till brought to a deserted quarry—  
And there the pathway ends.

He paused—for shadows of strange shape,  
Massy and black, before him lay ;  
But through the dark, and through the cold,  
And through the yawning fissures old,  
Did Peter boldly press his way.

Right through the quarry ;—and behold  
A scene of soft and lovely hue !  
Where blue and grey, and tender green,  
Together make as sweet a scene  
As ever human eye did view.

Beneath the clear blue sky he saw  
A little field of meadow ground ;  
But field or meadow name it not ;  
Call it of earth a small green plot,  
With rocks encompassed round.

The Swale flowed under the grey rocks,  
But he flowed quiet and unseen ;—  
You need a strong and stormy gale  
To bring the noises of the Swale  
To that green spot, so calm and green !

And is there no one dwelling here,  
No hermit with his beads and glass ?  
And does no little cottage look  
Upon this soft and fertile nook ?  
Does no one live near this green grass ?

Across the deep and quiet spot  
Is Peter driving through the grass—  
And now has reached the skirting trees ;  
When, turning round his head, he sees  
A solitary Ass.

" A Prize ! " cries Peter—but he first  
Must spy about him far and near :  
There's not a single house in sight,  
No woodman's hut, no cottage light—  
Peter, you need not fear !

There's nothing to be seen but woods,  
And rocks that spread a hoary gleam,  
And this one Beast, that from the bed  
Of the green meadow hangs his head  
Over the silent stream.

His head is with a halter bound ;  
The halter seizing, Peter leapt  
Upon the Creature's back, and plied  
With ready heels his shaggy side ;  
But still the Ass his station kept.

Then Peter gave a sudden jerk,  
A jerk that from a dungeon-floor  
Would have pulled up an iron ring ;  
But still the heavy-headed Thing  
Stood just as he had stood before !

Quoth Peter, leaping from his seat,  
" There is some plot against me laid ; "  
Once more the little meadow-ground  
And all the hoary cliffs around  
He cautiously surveyed.

All, all is silent—rocks and woods,  
All still and silent—far and near !  
Only the Ass, with motion dull,  
Upon the pivot of his skull  
Turns round his long left ear.

Thought Peter, What can mean all this ?  
Some ugly witchcraft must be here !  
—Once more the Ass, with motion dull,  
Upon the pivot of his skull  
Turned round his long left ear.

Suspicion ripened into dread ;  
Yet with deliberate action slow,  
His staff high-raising, in the pride  
Of skill, upon the sounding hide,  
He dealt a sturdy blow.

The poor Ass staggered with the shock ;  
And then, as if to take his ease,  
In quiet uncomplaining mood,  
Upon the spot where he had stood,  
Dropped gently down upon his knees :

As gently on his side he fell ;  
And by the river's brink did lie ;  
And, while he lay like one that mourned,  
The patient Beast on Peter turned  
His shining hazel eye.

'Twas but one mild, reproachful look,  
A look more tender than severe ;  
And straight in sorrow, not in dread,  
He turned the eye-ball in his head  
Towards the smooth river deep and clear.

Upon the Beast the sapling rings ;  
His lank sides heaved, his limbs they stirred ;  
He gave a groan, and then another,  
Of that which went before the brother,  
And then he gave a third.

All by the moonlight river side  
He gave three miserable groans ;  
And not till now hath Peter seen  
How gaunt the Creature is,—how lean  
And sharp his staring bones !

With legs stretched out and stiff he lay :—  
No word of kind commiseration  
Fell at the sight from Peter's tongue ;  
With hard contempt his heart was wrung,  
With hatred and vexation.

The meagre beast lay still as death ;  
And Peter's lips with fury quiver ;  
Quoth he, " You little mulish dog,  
I'll fling your carcase like a log  
Head-foremost down the river ! "

An impious oath confirmed the threat—  
Whereat from the earth on which he lay  
To all the echoes, south and north,  
And east and west, the Ass sent forth  
A long and clamorous bray !

This outcry, on the heart of Peter,  
Seems like a note of joy to strike,—  
Joy at the heart of Peter knocks ;  
But in the echo of the rocks  
Was something Peter did not like.

Whether to cheer his coward breast,  
Or that he could not break the chain,  
In this serene and solemn hour,  
Twined round him by demoniac power,  
To the blind work he turned again.

Among the rocks and winding crags ;  
Among the mountains far away ;  
Once more the Ass did lengthen out  
More ruefully a deep-drawn shout,  
The hard dry see-saw of his horrible bray !

What is there now in Peter's heart !  
Or whence the might of this strange sound ?  
The moon uneasy looked and dimmer,  
The broad blue heavens appeared to glimmer,  
And the rocks staggered all around—

From Peter's hand the sapling dropped !  
Threat has he none to execute ;  
"If any one should come and see  
That I am here, they'll think," quoth he,  
"I'm helping this poor dying brute."

He scans the Ass from limb to limb,  
And ventures now to uplift his eyes ;  
More steady looks the moon, and clear,  
More like themselves the rocks appear  
And touch more quiet skies.

His scorn returns—his hate revives ;  
He stoops the Ass's neck to seize  
With malice—that again takes flight ;  
For in the pool a startling sight  
Meets him, among the inverted trees.

Is it the moon's distorted face?  
 The ghost-like image of a cloud?  
 Is it a gallows there portrayed?  
 Is Peter of himself afraid?  
 Is it a coffin,—or a shroud?  
 A grisly idol hewn in stone?  
 Or imp from witch's lap let fall?  
 Perhaps a ring of shining fairies?  
 Such as pursue their feared vagaries  
 In sylvan bower, or haunted hall?  
 Is it a fiend that to a stake  
 Of fire his desperate self is tethering?  
 Or stubborn spirit doomed to yell  
 In solitary ward or cell,  
 Ten thousand miles from all his brethren?  
 Never did pulse so quickly throb,  
 And never heart so loudly panted;  
 He looks, he cannot choose but look;  
 Like some one reading in a book—  
 A book that is enchanted.  
 Ah, well-a-day for Peter Bell!  
 He will be turned to iron soon,  
 Meet Statue for the court of Fear!  
 His hat is up—and every hair  
 Bristles, and whitens in the moon!  
 He looks, he ponders, looks again;  
 He sees a motion—hears a groan;  
 His eyes will burst—his heart will break—  
 He gives a loud and frightful shriek,  
 And back he falls, as if his life were flown!

## PART SECOND

We left our Hero in a trance,  
 Beneath the alders, near the river;  
 The Ass is by the river-side,  
 And, where the feeble breezes glide,  
 Upon the stream the moonbeams quiver.  
 A happy respite! but at length  
 He feels the glimmering of the moon;  
 Wakes with glazed eye, and feebly sighing—  
 To sink, perhaps, where he is lying,  
 Into a second swoon!

He lifts his head, he sees his staff;  
He touches—'tis to him a treasure!  
Faint recollection seems to tell  
That he is yet where mortals dwell—  
A thought received with languid pleasure!

His head upon his elbow propped,  
Becoming less and less perplexed,  
Sky-ward he looks—to rock and wood—  
And then—upon the glassy flood  
His wandering eye is fixed.

Thought he, that is the face of one  
In his last sleep securely bound!  
So toward the stream his head he bent,  
And downward thrust his staff, intent  
The river's depth to sound.

*Now*—like a tempest-shattered bark,  
That overwhelmed and prostrate lies,  
And in a moment to the verge  
Is lifted of a foaming surge—  
Full suddenly the Ass doth rise!

His staring bones all shake with joy,  
And close by Peter's side he stands:  
While Peter o'er the river bends,  
The little Ass his neck extends,  
And fondly licks his hands.

Such life is in the Ass's eyes,  
Such life is in his limbs and ears;  
That Peter Bell, if he had been  
The veriest coward ever seen,  
Must now have thrown aside his fears.

The Ass looks on—and to his work  
Is Peter quietly resigned;  
He touches here—he touches there—  
And now among the dead man's hair  
His sapling Peter has entwined.

He pulls—and looks—and pulls again;  
And he whom the poor Ass had lost,  
The man who had been four days dead,  
Head-foremost from the river's bed  
Uprises like a ghost!

And Peter draws him to dry land ;  
And through the brain of Peter pass  
Some poignant twitches, fast and faster ;  
"No doubt," quoth he, "he is the Master  
Of this poor miserable Ass !"

The meagre Shadow that looks on—  
What would he now ? what is he doing ?  
His sudden fit of joy is flown,—  
He on his knees hath laid him down,  
As if he were his grief renewing ;

But no—that Peter on his back  
Must mount, he shows well as he can :  
Thought Peter then, come weal or woe,  
I'll do what he would have me do,  
In pity to this poor drowned man.

With that resolve he boldly mounts  
Upon the pleased and thankful Ass ;  
And then, without a moment's stay,  
That earnest Creature turned away,  
Leaving the body on the grass.

Intent upon his faithful watch,  
The Beast four days and nights had past ;  
A sweeter meadow ne'er was seen,  
And there the Ass four days had been,  
Nor ever once did break his fast :

Yet firm his step, and stout his heart ;  
The mead is crossed—the quarry's mouth  
Is reached ; but there the trusty guide  
Into a thicket turns aside,  
And deftly ambles towards the south.

When hark a burst of doleful sound !  
And Peter honestly might say,  
The like came never to his ears,  
Though he has been, full thirty years,  
A rover—night and day !

'Tis not a plover of the moors,  
'Tis not a bittern of the fen ;  
Nor can it be a barking fox,  
Nor night-bird chambered in the rocks,  
Nor wild-cat in a woody glen !

The Ass is startled—and stops short  
Right in the middle of the thicket;  
And Peter, wont to whistle loud  
Whether alone or in a crowd,  
Is silent as a silent cricket.

What ails you now, my little Bess?  
Well may you tremble and look grave!  
This cry—that rings along the wood,  
This cry—that floats adown the flood,  
Comes from the entrance of a cave:

I see a blooming Wood-boy there,  
And if I had the power to say  
How sorrowful the wanderer is,  
Your heart would be as sad as his  
Till you had kissed his tears away!

Grasping a hawthorn branch in hand,  
All bright with berries ripe and red,  
Into the cavern's mouth he peeps;  
Thence back into the moonlight creeps;  
Whom seeks he—whom?—the silent dead—

His father!—Him doth he require—  
Him hath he sought with fruitless pains,  
Among the rocks, behind the trees;  
Now creeping on his hands and knees,  
Now running o'er the open plains.

And hither is he come at last,  
When he through such a day has gone,  
By this dark cave to be distressed  
Like a poor bird—her plundered nest  
Hovering around with dolorous moan!

Of that intense and piercing cry  
The listening Ass conjectures well;  
Wild as it is, he there can read  
Some intermingled notes that plead  
With touches irresistible.

But Peter—when he saw the Ass  
Not only stop but turn, and change  
The cherished tenor of his pace  
That lamentable cry to chase—  
It wrought in him conviction strange;

A faith that, for the dead man's sake  
And this poor slave who loved him well,  
Vengeance upon his head will fall,  
Some visitation worse than all  
Which ever till this night befell.

Meanwhile the Ass to reach his home,  
Is striving stoutly as he may ;  
But, while he climbs the woody hill,  
The cry grows weak—and weaker still ;  
And now at last it dies away.

So with his freight the Creature turns  
Into a gloomy grove of beech,  
Along the shade with footsteps true  
Descending slowly, till the two  
The open moonlight reach.

And there, along the narrow dell,  
A fair smooth pathway you discern,  
A length of green and open road—  
As if it from a fountain flowed—  
Winding away between the fern.

The rocks that tower on either side  
Build up a wild fantastic scene ;  
Temples like those among the Hindoos,  
And mosques, and spires, and abbey windows,  
And castles all with ivy green !

And, while the Ass pursues his way,  
Along this solitary dell,  
As pensively his steps advance,  
The mosques and spires change countenance  
And look at Peter Bell !

That unintelligible cry  
Hath left him high in preparation,—  
Convinced that he, or soon or late,  
This very night will meet his fate—  
And so he sits in expectation !

The strenuous Animal hath clomb  
With the green path ; and now he wends  
Where, shining like the smoothest sca,  
In undisturbed immensity  
A level plain extends.

But whence this faintly-rustling sound  
By which the journeying pair are chased?  
—A withered leaf is close behind,  
Light plaything for the sportive wind  
Upon that solitary waste.

When Peter spied the moving thing,  
It only doubled his distress;  
"Where there is not a bush or tree,  
The very leaves they follow me—  
So huge hath been my wickedness!"

To a close lane they now are come,  
Where, as before, the enduring Ass  
Moves on without a moment's stop,  
Nor once turns round his head to crop  
A bramble-leaf or blade of grass.

Between the hedges as they go,  
The white dust sleeps upon the lane:  
And Peter, ever and anon  
Back-looking, sees, upon a stone,  
Or in the dust, a crimson stain.

A stain—as of a drop of blood  
By moonlight made more faint and wan;  
Ha! why these sinkings of despair?  
He knows not how the blood comes there—  
And Peter is a wicked man.

At length he spies a bleeding wound,  
Where he had struck the Ass's head;  
He sees the blood, knows what it is,—  
A glimpse of sudden joy was his,  
But then it quickly fled;

Of him whom sudden death had seized  
He thought,—of thee, O faithful Ass!  
And once again those ghastly pains  
Shoot to and fro through heart and reins,  
And through his brain like lightning pass.

#### PART THIRD

I've heard of one, a gentle Soul,  
Though given to sadness and to gloom,  
And for the fact will vouch,—one night  
It chanced that by a taper's light  
This man was reading in his room;

Bending, as you or I might bend.  
At night o'er any pious book,  
When sudden blackness overspread  
The snow-white page on which he read,  
And made the good man round him look.

The chamber walls were dark all round,—  
And to his book he turned again;  
—The light had left the lonely taper,  
And formed itself upon the paper  
Into large letters—bright and plain!

The godly book was in his hand—  
And, on the page, more black than coal,  
Appeared set forth in strange array,  
A *word*—which to his dying day  
Perplexed the good man's gentle soul.

The ghostly word, thus plainly seen,  
Did never from his lips depart;  
But he hath said, poor gentle wight!  
It brought full many a sin to light  
Out of the bottom of his heart.

Dread Spirits! to confound the meek  
Why wander from your course so far,  
Disordering colour, form, and stature!  
—Let good men feel the soul of nature,  
And see things as they are.

Yet, potent Spirits! well I know,  
How ye, that play with soul and sense,  
Are not unused to trouble friends  
Of goodness, for most gracious ends—  
And this I speak in reverence!

But might I give advice to you,  
Whom in my fear I love so well;  
From men of pensive virtue go,  
Dread Beings! and your empire show  
On hearts like that of Peter Bell.

Your presence often have I felt  
In darkness and the stormy night;  
And, with like force, if need there be,  
Ye can put forth your agency  
When earth is calm, and heaven is bright.

Then, coming from the wayward world,  
That powerful world in which ye dwell,  
Come, Spirits of the Mind! and try  
To-night, beneath the moonlight sky  
What may be done with Peter Bell!

—O, would that some more skilful voice  
My further labour might prevent!  
Kind Listeners, that around me sit,  
I feel that I am all unfit  
For such high argument.

I've played, I've danced, with my narration;  
I loitered long ere I began:  
Ye waited then on my good pleasure;  
Pour out indulgence still, in measure  
As liberal as ye can!

Our Travellers, ye remember well,  
Are thridding a sequestered lane;  
And Peter many tricks is trying,  
And many anodynes applying,  
To ease his conscience of its pain.

By this his heart is lighter far;  
And, finding that he can account  
So snugly for that crimson stain,  
His evil spirit up again  
Does like an empty bucket mount.

And Peter is a deep logician  
Who hath no lack of wit mercurial;  
"Blood drops—leaves rustle—yet," quoth he,  
"This poor man never, but for me,  
Could have had Christian burial.

"And, say the best you can, 'tis plain,  
That here has been some wicked dealing;  
No doubt the devil in me wrought;  
I'm not the man who could have thought  
An Ass like this was worth the stealing!"

So from his pocket Peter takes  
His shining horn tobacco-box;  
And, in a light and careless way,  
As men who with their purpose play,  
Upon the lid he knocks.

Let them whose voice can stop the clouds,  
Whose cunning eye can see the wind,  
Tell to a curious world the cause  
Why, making here a sudden pause,  
The Ass turned round his head, and *grinned*.

Appalling process! I have marked  
The like on heath, in lonely wood;  
And, verily, have seldom met  
A spectacle more hideous—yet  
It suited Peter's present mood.

And, grinning in his turn, his teeth  
He in jocose defiance showed—  
When, to upset his spiteful mirth,  
A murmur, pent within the earth,  
In the dead earth beneath the road

Rolled audibly! it swept along,  
A muffled noise—a rumbling sound!—  
'Twas by a troop of miners made,  
Plying with gunpowder their trade,  
Some twenty fathoms under ground.

Small cause of dire effect! for, surely,  
If ever mortal, King or Cotter,  
Believed that earth was charged to quake  
And yawn for his unworthy sake,  
'Twas Peter Bell the Potter.

But, as an oak in breathless air  
Will stand though to the centre hewn;  
Or as the weakest things, if frost  
Have stiffened them, maintain their post;  
So he, beneath the gazing moon!—

The Beast bestriding thus, he reached  
A spot where, in a sheltering cove,  
A little chapel stands alone,  
With greenest ivy overgrown,  
And tufted with an ivy grove;

Dying insensibly away  
From human thoughts and purposes,  
It seemed—wall, window, roof and tower  
To bow to some transforming power,  
And blend with the surrounding trees.

As ruinous a place it was,  
Thought Peter, in the shire of Fife  
That served my turn, when following still  
From land to land a reckless will  
I married my sixth wife !

The unheeding Ass moved slowly on,  
And now is passing by an inn  
Brim-full of a carousing crew,  
That make, with curses not a few,  
An uproar and a drunken din.

I cannot well express the thoughts  
Which Peter in those noises found ;—  
A stifling power compressed his frame,  
While-as a swimming darkness came  
Over that dull and dreary sound.

For well did Peter know the sound ;  
The language of those drunken joys  
To him, a jovial soul, I ween,  
But a few hours ago, had been  
A gladsome and a welcome noise.

*Now*, turned adrift into the past,  
He finds no solace in his course ;  
Like planet-stricken men of yore,  
He trembles, smitten to the core  
By strong compunction and remorse.

But, more than all, his heart is stung  
To think of one, almost a child ;  
A sweet and playful Highland girl,  
As light and beauteous as a squirrel,  
As beauteous and as wild !

Her dwelling was a lonely house,  
A cottage in a heathy dell ;  
And she put on her gown of green,  
And left her mother at sixteen,  
And followed Peter Bell.

But many good and pious thoughts  
Had she ; and, in the kirk to pray,  
Two long Scotch miles, through rain or snow  
To kirk she had been used to go,  
Twice every Sabbath-day.

And, when she followed Peter Bell,  
It was to lead an honest life ;  
For he, with tongue not used to falter,  
Had pledged his troth before the altar  
To love her as his wedded wife.

A mother's hope is hers ;—but soon  
She drooped and pined like one forlorn ;  
From Scripture she a name did borrow ;  
Benoni, or the child of sorrow,  
She called her babe unborn.

For she had learned how Peter lived,  
And took it in most grievous part ;  
She to the very bone was worn,  
And, ere that little child was born,  
Died of a broken heart.

And now the Spirits of the Mind  
Are busy with poor Peter Bell ;  
Upon the rights of visual sense  
Usurping, with a prevalence  
More terrible than magic spell.

Close by a brake of flowering furze  
(Above it shivering aspens play)  
He sees an unsubstantial creature,  
His very self in form and feature,  
Not four yards from the broad highway :

And stretched beneath the furze he sees  
The Highland girl—it is no other ;  
And hears her crying as she cried,  
The very moment that she died,  
“ My mother ! oh my mother ! ”

The sweat pours down from Peter's face,  
So grievous is his heart's contrition ;  
With agony his eye-balls ache  
While he beholds by the furze-brake  
This miserable vision !

Calm is the well-deserving brute,  
*His* peace hath no offence betrayed ;  
But now, while down that slope he wends  
A voice to Peter's ear ascends,  
Resounding from the woody glade :

The voice, though clamorous as a horn  
Re-echoed by a naked rock,  
Comes from that tabernacle—List !  
Within, a fervent Methodist  
Is preaching to no heedless flock !

"Repent ! repent !" he cries aloud,  
"While yet ye may find mercy ;—strive  
To love the Lord with all your might ;  
Turn to him, seek him day and night,  
And save your souls alive !

"Repent ! repent ! though ye have gone,  
Through paths of wickedness and woe,  
After the Babylonian harlot ;  
And, though your sins be red as scarlet,  
They shall be white as snow !"

Even as he passed the door, these words  
Did plainly come to Peter's ears ;  
And they such joyful tidings were,  
The joy was more than he could bear !—  
He melted into tears.

Sweet tears of hope and tenderness !  
And fast they fell, a plenteous shower !  
His nerves, his sinews seemed to melt ;  
Through all his iron frame was felt  
A gentle, a relaxing, power !

Each fibre of his frame was weak ;  
Weak all the animal within ;  
But, in its helplessness, grew mild  
And gentle as an infant child,  
An infant that has known no sin.

'Tis said, meek Beast ! that, through Heaven's grace,  
He not unmoved did notice now  
The cross upon thy shoulder scored,  
For lasting impress, by the Lord  
To whom all human-kind shall bow ;

Memorial of his touch—that day  
When Jesus humbly deigned to ride,  
Entering the proud Jerusalem,  
By an immeasurable stream  
Of shouting people deified !

Meanwhile the persevering Ass  
Turned towards a gate that hung in view  
Across a shady lane ; his chest  
Against the yielding gate he pressed  
And quietly passed through.

And up the stony lane he goes ;  
No ghost more softy ever trod ;  
Among the stones and pebbles, he  
Sets down his hoofs inaudibly,  
As if with felt his hoofs were shod.

Along the lane the trusty Ass  
Went twice two hundred yards or more,  
And no one could have guessed his aim,—  
Till to a lonely house he came,  
And stopped beside the door.

Thought Peter, 'tis the poor man's home !  
He listens—not a sound is heard  
Save from the trickling household rill ;  
But, stepping o'er the cottage-sill,  
Forthwith a little Girl appeared.

She to the Meeting-house was bound  
In hopes some tidings there to gather :  
No glimpse it is, no doubtful gleam ;  
She saw—and uttered with a scream,  
“ My father ! here's my father ! ”

The very word was plainly heard,  
Heard plainly by the wretched Mother—  
Her joy was like a deep affright :  
And forth she rushed into the light,  
And saw it was another !

And, instantly, upon the earth,  
Beneath the full moon shining bright,  
Close to the Ass's feet she fell ;  
At the same moment Peter Bell  
Dismounts in most unhappy plight.

As he beheld the Woman lie  
Breathless and motionless, the mind  
Of Peter sadly was confused ;  
But, though to such demands unused,  
And helpless almost as the blind,

He raised her up ; and, while he held  
Her body propped against his knee,  
The Woman waked—and when she spied  
The poor Ass standing by her side,  
She moaned most bitterly.

“Oh ! God be praised—my heart’s at ease—  
For he is dead—I know it well !”  
—At this she wept a bitter flood ;  
And, in the best way that he could,  
His tale did Peter tell.

He trembles—he is pale as death ;  
His voice is weak with perturbation ;  
He turns aside his head, he pauses ;  
Poor Peter, from a thousand causes,  
Is crippled sore in his narration.

At length she learned how he espied  
The Ass in that small meadow-ground ;  
And that her Husband now lay dead,  
Beside that luckless river’s bed  
In which he had been drowned.

A piercing look the Widow cast  
Upon the Beast that near her stands ;  
She sees ’tis he, that ’tis the same ;  
She calls the poor Ass by his name,  
And wrings, and wrings her hands.

“O wretched loss—untimely stroke !  
If he had died upon his bed !  
He knew not one forewarning pain ;  
He never will come home again—  
Is dead, for ever dead !”

Beside the woman Peter stands ;  
His heart is opening more and more ;  
A holy sense pervades his mind ;  
He feels what he for human kind  
Had never felt before.

At length, by Peter’s arm sustained,  
The Woman rises from the ground—  
“Oh, mercy ! something must be done,  
My little Rachel, you must run,—  
Some willing neighbour must be found.

"Make haste—my little Rachel—do,  
The first you meet with—bid him come,  
Ask him to lend his horse to-night,  
And this good Man, whom Heaven requite,  
Will help to bring the body home."

Away goes Rachel weeping loud ;—  
An Infant, waked by her distress,  
Makes in the house a piteous cry ;  
And Peter hears the Mother sigh,  
"Seven are they, and all fatherless !"

And now is Peter taught to feel  
That man's heart is a holy thing ;  
And Nature, through a world of death,  
Breathes into him a second breath,  
More searching than the breath of spring.

Upon a stone the Woman sits  
In agony of silent grief—  
From his own thoughts did Peter start ;  
He longs to press her to his heart,  
From love that cannot find relief.

But roused, as if through every limb  
Had past a sudden shock of dread,  
The Mother o'er the threshold flies,  
And up the cottage stairs she hies,  
And on the pillow lays her burning head.

And Peter turns his steps aside  
Into a shade of darksome trees,  
Where he sits down, he knows not how,  
With his hands pressed against his brow,  
His elbows on his tremulous knees.

There, self-involved, does Peter sit  
Until no sign of life he makes,  
As if his mind were sinking deep  
Through years that have been long asleep ;  
The trance is passed away—he wakes ;

He lifts his head—and sees the Ass  
Yet standing in the clear moonshine ;  
"When shall I be as good as thou ?  
Oh ! would, poor beast, that I had now  
A heart but half as good as thine !"

But *He*—who deviously hath sought  
His Father through the lonesome woods,  
Hath sought, proclaiming to the ear  
Of night his grief and sorrowful fear—  
He comes, escaped from fields and floods;—

With weary pace is drawing nigh ;  
He sees the Ass—and nothing living  
Had ever such a fit of joy  
As hath this little orphan Boy,  
For he has no misgiving !

Forth to the gentle Ass he springs,  
And up about his neck he climbs ;  
In loving words he talks to him,  
He kisses, kisses face and limb,—  
He kisses him a thousand times !

This Peter sees, while in the shade  
He stood beside the cottage-door ;  
And Peter Bell, the ruffian wild,  
Sobs loud, he sobs even like a child,  
“O God ! I can endure no more !”

—Here ends my Tale : for in a trice  
Arrived a neighbour with his horse ;  
Peter went forth with him straightway ;  
And, with due care, ere break of day,  
Together they brought back the Corse.

And many years did this poor Ass,  
Whom once it was my luck to see  
Cropping the shrubs of Leming-Lane,  
Help by his labour to maintain  
The Widow and her family.

And Peter Bell, who, till that night,  
Had been the wildest of his clan,  
Forsook his crimes, renounced his folly,  
And, after ten months' melancholy,  
Became a good and honest man.

THE IDIOT BOY<sup>1</sup>

'Tis eight o'clock,—a clear March night,  
 The moon is up,—the sky is blue,  
 The owlet, in the moonlight air,  
 Shouts from nobody knows where ;  
 He lengthens out his lonely shout,  
 Halloo ! halloo ! a long halloo !

—Why bustle thus about your door,  
 What means this bustle, Betty Foy ?  
 Why are you in this mighty fret ?  
 And why on horseback have you set  
 Him whom you love, your Idiot Boy ?

Scarcely a soul is out of bed ;  
 Good Betty, put him down again ;  
 His lips with joy they burr at you ;  
 But, Betty ! what has he to do  
 With stirrup, saddle, or with rein ?

But Betty's bent on her intent ;  
 For her good neighbour, Susan Gale,  
 Old Susan, she who dwells alone,  
 Is sick, and makes a piteous moan  
 As if her very life would fail.

There's not a house within a mile,  
 No hand to help them in distress ;  
 Old Susan lies a-bed in pain,  
 And sorely puzzled are the twain,  
 For what she ails they cannot guess.

And Betty's husband's at the wood,  
 Where by the week he doth abide,  
 A woodman in the distant vale ;  
 There's none to help poor Susan Gale ;  
 What must be done ? what will betide ?

<sup>1</sup> The last stanza—"The Cocks did crow to-whoo, to-whoo, And the sun did shine so cold"—was the foundation of the whole. The words were reported to me by my dear friend, Thomas Poole ; but I have since heard the same repeated of other Idiots. Let me add that this long poem was composed in the groves of Alfoxden, almost extempore ; not a word, I believe, being corrected, though one stanza was omitted. I mention this in gratitude to those happy moments, for, in truth, I never wrote anything with so much glee.

And Betty from the lane has fetched  
Her Pony, that is mild and good ;  
Whether he be in joy or pain,  
Feeding at will along the lane,  
Or bringing faggots from the wood.

And he is all in travelling trim,—  
And, by the moonlight, Betty Foy  
Has on the well-girt saddle set  
(The like was never heard of yet)  
Him whom she loves, her Idiot Boy.

And he must post without delay  
Across the bridge and through the dale,  
And by the church, and o'er the down,  
To bring a Doctor from the town,  
Or she will die, old Susan Gale.

There is no need of boot or spur,  
There is no need of whip or wand ;  
For Johnny has his holly-bough,  
And with a *hurly-burly* now  
He shakes the green bough in his hand.

And Betty o'er and o'er has told  
The Boy, who is her best delight,  
Both what to follow, what to shun,  
What do, and what to leave undone,  
How turn to left, and how to right.

And Betty's most especial charge,  
Was, " Johnny! Johnny! mind that you  
Come home again, nor stop at all,—  
Come home again, whate'er befall,  
My Johnny, do, I pray you do."

To this did Johnny answer make,  
Both with his head and with his hand,  
And proudly shook the bridle too ;  
And then! his words were not a few,  
Which Betty well could understand.

And now that Johnny is just going,  
Though Betty's in a mighty flurry,  
She gently pats the Pony's side,  
On which her Idiot Boy must ride,  
And seems no longer in a hurry.

But when the Pony moved his legs,  
Oh ! then for the poor Idiot Boy !  
For joy he cannot hold the bridle,  
For joy his head and heels are idle,  
He's idle all for very joy.

And while the Pony moves his legs,  
In Johnny's left hand you may see  
The green bough motionless and dead :  
The Moon that shines above his head  
Is not more still and mute than he.

His heart it was so full of glee,  
That till full fifty yards were gone,  
He quite forgot his holly whip,  
And all his skill in horsemanship :  
Oh ! happy, happy, happy John.

And while the Mother, at the door,  
Stands fixed, her face with joy o'erflows,  
Proud of herself, and proud of him,  
She sees him in his travelling trim,  
How quietly her Johnny goes.

The silence of her Idiot Boy,  
What hopes it sends to Betty's heart !  
He's at the guide-post—he turns right ;  
She watches till he's out of sight,  
And Betty will not then depart.

Burr, burr—now Johnny's lips they burr,  
As loud as any mill, or near it ;  
Meek as a lamb the Pony moves,  
And Johnny makes the noise he loves,  
And Betty listens, glad to hear it.

Away she hies to Susan Gale :  
Her Messenger's in merry tune ;  
The owlets hoot, the owlets curr,  
And Johnny's lips they burr, burr, burr,  
As on he goes beneath the moon.

His steed and he right well agree ;  
For of this Pony there's a rumour,  
That, should he lose his eyes and ears,  
And should he live a thousand years,  
He never will be out of humour.

But then he is a horse that thinks !  
And when he thinks, his pace is slack ;  
Now, though he knows poor Johnny well,  
Yet, for his life, he cannot tell  
What he has got upon his back.

So through the moonlight lanes they go,  
And far into the moonlight dale,  
And by the church, and o'er the down,  
To bring a Doctor from the town,  
To comfort poor old Susan Gale.

And Betty, now at Susan's side,  
Is in the middle of her story,  
What speedy help her Boy will bring,  
With many a most diverting thing,  
Of Johnny's wit, and Johnny's glory.

And Betty, still at Susan's side,  
By this time is not quite so flurried :  
Demure with porringer and plate  
She sits, as if in Susan's fate  
Her life and soul were buried.

But Betty, poor good woman ! she,  
You plainly in her face may read it,  
Could lend out of that moment's store  
Five years of happiness or more  
To any that might need it.

But yet I guess that now and then  
With Betty all was not so well ;  
And to the road she turns her ears,  
And thence full many a sound she hears,  
Which she to Susan will not tell.

Poor Susan moans, poor Susan groans ;  
"As sure as there's a moon in heaven,"  
Cries Betty, "he'll be back again ;  
They'll both be here—'tis almost ten—  
Both will be here before eleven."

Poor Susan moans, poor Susan groans ;  
The clock gives warning for eleven ;  
'Tis on the stroke—"He must be near,"  
Quoth Betty, "and will soon be here,  
As sure as there's a moon in heaven."

The clock is on the stroke of twelve,  
And Johnny is not yet in sight :  
—The Moon's in heaven, as Betty sees,  
But Betty is not quite at ease ;  
And Susan has a dreadful night.

And Betty, half an hour ago,  
On Johnny vile reflections cast :  
" A little idle sauntering Thing ! "  
With other names, an endless string ;  
But now that time is gone and past.

And Betty's drooping at the heart,  
That happy time all past and gone,  
" How can it be he is so late ?  
The Doctor, he has made him wait ;  
Susan ! they'll both be here anon."

And Susan's growing worse and worse,  
And Betty's in a sad *quandary* ;  
And then there's nobody to say  
If she must go, or she must stay !  
—She's in a sad *quandary*.

The clock is on the stroke of one ;  
But neither Doctor nor his Guide  
Appears along the moonlight road ;  
There's neither horse nor man abroad,  
And Betty's still at Susan's side.

And Susan now begins to fear  
Of sad mischances not a few,  
That Johnny may perhaps be drowned ;  
Or lost, perhaps, and never found ;  
Which they must both for ever rue.

She prefaced half a hint of this  
With, " God forbid it should be true ! "  
At the first word that Susan said  
Cried Betty, rising from the bed,  
" Susan, I'd gladly stay with you.

" I must be gone, I must away :  
Consider, Johnny's but half-wise ;  
Susan, we must take care of him,  
If he is hurt in life or limb"—  
" Oh God forbid ! " poor Susan cries.

"What can I do?" says Betty, going,  
"What can I do to ease your pain?  
Good Susan, tell me, and I'll stay;  
I fear you're in a dreadful way,  
But I shall soon be back again."

"Nay, Betty, go! good Betty, go!  
There's nothing that can ease my pain."  
Then off she hies; but with a prayer  
That God poor Susan's life would spare,  
Till she comes back again.

So, through the moonlight lane she goes,  
And far into the moonlight dale;  
And how she ran, and how she walked,  
And all that to herself she talked,  
Would surely be a tedious tale.

In high and low, above, below,  
In great and small, in round and square,  
In tree and tower was Johnny seen,  
In bush and brake, in black and green;  
'Twas Johnny, Johnny, every where.

And while she crossed the bridge, there came  
A thought with which her heart is sore—  
Johnny perhaps his horse forsook,  
To hunt the moon within the brook,  
And never will be heard of more.

Now is she high upon the down,  
Alone amid a prospect wide;  
There's neither Johnny nor his Horse  
Among the fern or in the gorse;  
There's neither Doctor nor his Guide.

"O saints! what is become of him?  
Perhaps he's climbed into an oak,  
Where he will stay till he is dead;  
Or, sadly he has been misled,  
And joined the wandering gipsy-folk.

"Or him that wicked Pony's carried  
To the dark cave, the goblin's hall;  
Or in the castle he's pursuing  
Among the ghosts his own undoing;  
Or playing with the waterfall."

At poor old Susan then she railed,  
While to the town she posts away ;  
"If Susan had not been so ill,  
Alas ! I should have had him still,  
My Johnny, till my dying day."

Poor Betty, in this sad distemper,  
The Doctor's self could hardly spare :  
Unworthy things she talked, and wild ;  
Even he, of cattle the most mild,  
The Pony had his share.

But now she's fairly in the town,  
And to the Doctor's door she hies ;  
'Tis silence all on every side ;  
The town so long, the town so wide,  
Is silent as the skies.

And now she's at the Doctor's door,  
She lifts the knocker, rap, rap, rap ;  
The Doctor at the casement shows  
His glimmering eyes that peep and doze !  
And one hand rubs his old night-cap.

"O Doctor ! Doctor ! where's my Johnny ?"  
"I'm here, what is't you want with me ?"  
"O Sir ! you know I'm Betty Foy,  
And I have lost my poor dear Boy,  
You know him—him you often see ;

"He's not so wise as some folks be :"  
"The devil take his wisdom !" said  
The Doctor, looking somewhat grim,  
"What, Woman ! should I know of him ?"  
And, grumbling, he went back to bed !

"O woe is me ! O woe is me !  
Here will I die ; here will I die ;  
I thought to find my lost one here,  
But he is neither far nor near,  
Oh ! what a wretched Mother I !"

She stops, she stands, she looks about ;  
Which way to turn she cannot tell.  
Poor Betty ! it would ease her pain  
If she had heart to knock again ;  
—The clock strikes three—a dismal knell !

Then up along the town she hies,  
No wonder if her senses fail;  
This piteous news so much it shocked her,  
She quite forgot to send the Doctor,  
To comfort poor old Susan Gale.

And now she's high upon the down,  
And she can see a mile of road:  
"O cruel! I'm almost threescore;  
Such night as this was ne'er before,  
There's not a single soul abroad."

She listens, but she cannot hear  
The foot of horse, the voice of man;  
The streams with softest sound are flowing,  
The grass you almost hear it growing,  
You hear it now, if e'er you can.

The owlets through the long blue night  
Are shouting to each other still:  
Fond lovers! yet not quite hob nob,  
They lengthen out the tremulous sob,  
That echoes far from hill to hill.

Poor Betty now has lost all hope,  
Her thoughts are bent on deadly sin,  
A green-grown pond she just has past,  
And from the brink she hurries fast,  
Lest she should drown herself therein.

And now she sits her down and weeps;  
Such tears she never shed before;  
"Oh dear, dear Pony! my sweet joy!  
Oh carry back my Idiot Boy!  
And we will ne'er o'erload thee more."

A thought is come into her head:  
The Pony he is mild and good,  
And we have always used him well;  
Perhaps he's gone along the dell,  
And carried Johnny to the wood.

Then up she springs as if on wings;  
She thinks no more of deadly sin;  
If Betty fifty ponds should see,  
The last of all her thoughts would be  
To drown herself therein.

O Reader! now that I might tell  
What Johnny and his Horse are doing,  
What they've been doing all this time,  
Oh could I put it into rhyme,  
A most delightful tale pursuing!

Perhaps, and no unlikely thought!  
He with his Pony now doth roam  
The cliffs and peaks so high that are,  
To lay his hands upon a star,  
And in his pocket bring it home.

Perhaps he's turned himself about,  
His face unto his horse's tail,  
And, still and mute, in wonder lost,  
All silent as a horseman-ghost,  
He travels slowly down the vale.

And now, perhaps, is hunting sheep,  
A fierce and dreadful hunter he;  
Yon valley, now so trim and green,  
In five months' time, should he be seen,  
A desert wilderness will be!

Perhaps, with head and heels on fire,  
And like the very soul of evil,  
He's galloping away, away,  
And so will gallop on for aye,  
The bane of all that dread the devil!

I to the Muses have been bound  
These fourteen years, by strong indentures.  
O gentle Muses! let me tell  
But half of what to him befell;  
He surely met with strange adventures.

O gentle Muses! is this kind?  
Why will ye thus my suit repel?  
Why of your further aid bereave me?  
And can ye thus unfriended leave me,  
Ye Muses! whom I love so well?

Who's yon, that, near the waterfall,  
Which thunders down with headlong force,  
Beneath the moon, yet shining fair,  
As careless as if nothing were,  
Sits upright on a feeding horse?

Unto his horse—there feeding free,  
He seems, I think, the rein to give;

Of moon or stars he takes no heed ;  
Of such we in romances read :  
—"Tis Johnny ! Johnny ! as I live.

And that's the very Pony too !  
Where is she, where is Betty Foy ?  
She hardly can sustain her fears ;  
The roaring waterfall she hears,  
And cannot find her Idiot Boy.

Your Pony's worth his weight in gold :  
Then calm your terrors, Betty Foy !  
She's coming from among the trees,  
And now all full in view she sees  
Him whom she loves, her Idiot Boy.

And Betty sees the Pony too :  
Why stand you thus, good Betty Foy ?  
It is no goblin, 'tis no ghost,  
"Tis he whom you so long have lost,  
He whom you love, your Idiot Boy.

She looks again—her arms are up—  
She screams—she cannot move for joy ;  
She darts, as with a torrent's force  
She almost has o'eturned the Horse,  
And fast she holds her Idiot Boy.

And Johnny burrs, and laughs aloud ;  
Whether in cunning or in joy  
I cannot tell ; but while he laughs,  
Betty a drunken pleasure quaffs  
To hear again her Idiot Boy.

And now she's at the Pony's tail,  
And now is at the Pony's head,—  
On that side now, and now on this ;  
And, almost stifled with her bliss,  
A few sad tears does Betty shed.

She kisses o'er and o'er again  
Him whom she loves, her Idiot Boy ;  
She's happy here, is happy there,  
She is uneasy every where ;  
Her limbs are all alive with joy.

She pats the Pony, where or when  
She knows not, happy Betty Foy !  
The little Pony glad may be,  
But he is milder far than she,  
You hardly can perceive his joy.

"Oh! Johnny, never mind the Doctor;  
You've done your best, and that is all:"  
She took the reins, when this was said,  
And gently turned the Pony's head  
From the loud waterfall.

By this the stars were almost gone,  
The moon was setting on the hill,  
So pale you scarcely looked at her:  
The little birds began to stir,  
Though yet their tongues were still.

The Pony, Betty, and her Boy,  
Wind slowly through the woody dale;  
And who is she, betimes abroad,  
That hobbles up the steep rough road?  
Who is it, but old Susan Gale?

Long time lay Susan lost in thought;  
And many dreadful fears beset her,  
Both for her Messenger and Nurse;  
And, as her mind grew worse and worse,  
Her body—it grew better.

She turned, she tossed herself in bed,  
On all sides doubts and terrors met her;  
Point after point did she discuss;  
And, while her mind was fighting thus,  
Her body still grew better.

"Alas! what is become of them?  
These fears can never be endured;  
I'll to the wood."—The word scarce said,  
Did Susan rise up from her bed,  
As if by magic cured.

Away she goes up hill and down,  
And to the wood at length is come;  
She spies her Friends, she shouts a greeting;  
Oh me! it is a merry meeting  
As ever was in Christendom.

The owls have hardly sung their last,  
While our four travellers homeward wend;  
The owls have hooted all night long,  
And with the owls began my song,  
And with the owls must end.

For while they all were travelling home,  
Cried Betty, "Tell us, Johnny, do,  
Where all this long night you have been,  
What you have heard, what you have seen :  
And, Johnny, mind you tell us true."

Now Johnny all night long had heard  
The owls in tuneful concert strive ;  
No doubt too he the moon had seen ;  
For in the moonlight he had been  
From eight o'clock till five.

And thus, to Betty's question, he  
Made answer, like a traveller bold,  
(His very words I give to you,)  
"The cocks did crow to-whoo, to-whoo,  
And the sun did shine so cold !"  
—Thus answered Johnny in his glory,  
And that was all his travel's story.

(1798)

#### THE BROTHERS<sup>1</sup>

"THESE Tourists, heaven preserve us ! needs must live  
A profitable life : some glance along,  
Rapid and gay, as if the earth were air,  
And they were butterflies to wheel about  
Long as the summer lasted : some, as wise,  
Perched on the forehead of a jutting crag,  
Pencil in hand and book upon the knee,  
Will look and scribble, scribble on and look,  
Until a man might travel twelve stout miles,  
Or reap an acre of his neighbour's corn.  
But, for that moping Son of Idleness,  
Why can he tarry *yonder* ?—In our churchyard  
Is neither epitaph nor monument,  
Tombstone nor name—only the turf we tread  
And a few natural graves."

To Jane, his wife,  
Thus spake the homely Priest of Ennerdale.

<sup>1</sup> This poem was composed in a grove at the north-eastern end of Grasmere lake, which grove was in a great measure destroyed by turning the high-road along the side of the water. The few trees that are left were spared at my intercession. The poem arose out of the fact, mentioned to me at Ennerdale, that a shepherd had fallen asleep upon the top of the rock called The Pillar, and perished as here described, his staff being left midway on the rock.

It was a July evening ; and he sate  
Upon the long stone-seat beneath the eaves  
Of his old cottage,—as it chanced, that day,  
Employed in winter's work. Upon the stone  
His wife sate near him, teasing matted wool,  
While, from the twin cards toothed with glittering wire,  
He fed the spindle of his youngest child,  
Who, in the open air, with due accord  
Of busy hands and back-and-forward steps  
Her large round wheel was turning. Towards the field  
In which the Parish Chapel stood alone,  
Girt round with a bare ring of mossy wall,  
While half an hour went by, the Priest had sent  
Many a long look of wonder : and at last,  
Risen from his seat, beside the snow-white ridge  
Of carded wool which the old man had piled  
He laid his implements with gentle care,  
Each in the other locked ; and, down the path  
That from his cottage to the churchyard led,  
He took his way, impatient to accost  
The Stranger, whom he saw still lingering there.

'Twas one well known to him in former days,  
A Shepherd-lad ; who ere his sixteenth year  
Had left that calling, tempted to entrust  
His expectations to the fickle winds  
And perilous waters ; with the mariners  
A fellow-mariner ;—and so had fared  
Through twenty seasons ; but he had been reared  
Among the mountains, and he in his heart  
Was half a shepherd on the stormy seas.  
Oft in the piping shrouds had Leonard heard  
The tones of waterfalls, and inland sounds  
Of caves and trees :—and, when the regular wind  
Between the tropics filled the steady sail,  
And blew with the same breath through days and weeks,  
Lengthening invisibly its weary line  
Along the cloudless Main, he, in those hours  
Of tiresome indolence, would often hang  
Over the vessel's side, and gaze and gaze ;  
And, while the broad blue wave and sparkling foam  
Flashed round him images and hues that wrought  
In union with the employment of his heart,  
He, thus by feverish passion overcome,  
Even with the organs of his bodily eye,  
Below him, in the bosom of the deep,

Saw mountains ; saw the forms of sheep that grazed  
On verdant hills—with dwellings among trees,  
And shepherds clad in the same country grey  
Which he himself had worn.<sup>1</sup>

And now, at last,  
From perils manifold, with some small wealth  
Acquired by traffic 'mid the Indian Isles,  
To his paternal home he is returned,  
With a determined purpose to resume  
The life he had lived there ; both for the sake  
Of many darling pleasures, and the love  
Which to an only brother he has borne  
In all his hardships, since that happy time  
When, whether it blew foul or fair, they two  
Were brother-shepherds on their native hills.  
—They were the last of all their race : and now,  
When Leonard had approached his home, his heart  
Failed in him ; and, not venturing to enquire  
Tidings of one so long and dearly loved,  
He to the solitary churchyard turned ;  
That, as he knew in what particular spot  
His family were laid, he thence might learn  
If still his Brother lived, or to the file  
Another grave was added.—He had found  
Another grave,—near which a full half-hour  
He had remained ; but, as he gazed, there grew  
Such a confusion in his memory,  
That he began to doubt ; and even to hope  
That he had seen this heap of turf before,—  
That it was not another grave ; but one  
He had forgotten. He had lost his path,  
As up the vale, that afternoon, he walked  
Through fields which once had been well known to him :  
And oh what joy this recollection now  
Sent to his heart ! he lifted up his eyes,  
And, looking round, imagined that he saw  
Strange alteration wrought on every side  
Among the woods and fields, and that the rocks,  
And everlasting hills themselves were changed.

By this the Priest, who down the field had come,  
Unseen by Leonard, at the churchyard gate  
Stopped short,—and thence, at leisure, limb by limb

<sup>1</sup> This description of the Calenture is sketched from an imperfect recollection of an admirable one in prose, by Mr. Gilbert, author of the *Hurricane*.

Perused him with a gay complacency.  
 Ay, thought the Vicar, smiling to himself,  
 'Tis one of those who needs must leave the path  
 Of the world's business to go wild alone :  
 His arms have a perpetual holiday ;  
 The happy man will creep about the fields,  
 Following his fancies by the hour, to bring  
 Tears down his cheek, or solitary smiles  
 Into his face, until the setting sun  
 Write fool upon his forehead.—Planted thus  
 Beneath a shed that over-arched the gate  
 Of this rude churchyard, till the stars appeared  
 The good Man might have communed with himself.  
 But that the Stranger, who had left the grave,  
 Approached ; he recognised the Priest at once,  
 And, after greetings interchanged, and given  
 By Leonard to the Vicar as to one  
 Unknown to him, this dialogue ensued.

*Leonard.* You live, Sir, in these dales, a quiet life :  
 Your years make up one peaceful family ;  
 And who would grieve and fret, if, welcome come  
 And welcome gone, they are so like each other,  
 They cannot be remembered ? Scarce a funeral  
 Comes to this churchyard once in eighteen months ;  
 And yet, some changes must take place among you :  
 And you, who dwell here, even among these rocks,  
 Can trace the finger of mortality,  
 And see, that with our threescore years and ten  
 We are not all that perish.—I remember,  
 (For many years ago I passed this road)  
 There was a foot-way all along the fields  
 By the brook-side—'tis gone—and that dark cleft !  
 To me it does not seem to wear the face  
 Which then it had !

*Priest.* Nay, Sir, for aught I know,  
 That chasm is much the same—

*Leonard.* But, surely, yonder—

*Priest.* Ay, there, indeed, your memory is a friend  
 That does not play you false.—On that tall pike  
 (It is the loneliest place of all these hills)  
 There were two springs which bubbled side by side,  
 As if they had been made that they might be  
 Companions for each other : the huge crag  
 Was rent with lightning—one hath disappeared ;  
 The other, left behind, is flowing still.

For accidents and changes such as these,  
We want not store of them ;—a water-spout  
Will bring down half a mountain ; what a feast  
For folks that wander up and down like you,  
To see an acre's breadth of that wide cliff  
One roaring cataract ! a sharp May-storm  
Will come with loads of January snow,  
And in one night send twenty score of sheep  
To feed the ravens ; or a shepherd dies  
By some untoward death among the rocks :  
The ice breaks up and sweeps away a bridge ;  
A wood is felled :—and then for our own homes !  
A child is born or christened, a field ploughed,  
A daughter sent to service, a web spun,  
The old house-clock is decked with a new face ;  
And hence, so far from wanting facts or dates  
To chronicle the time, we all have here  
A pair of diaries,—one serving, Sir,  
For the whole dale, and one for each fireside—  
Yours was a stranger's judgment : for historians,  
Commend me to these valleys !

*Leonard.* Yet your Churchyard  
Seems, if such freedom may be used with you,  
To say that you are heedless of the past :  
An orphan could not find his mother's grave :  
Here's neither head nor foot stone, plate of brass,  
Cross-bones nor skull,—type of our earthly state  
Nor emblem of our hopes : the dead man's home  
Is but a fellow to that pasture-field.

*Priest.* Why, there, Sir, is a thought that's new to me !  
The stone-cutters, 'tis true, might beg their bread  
If every English churchyard were like ours ;  
Yet your conclusion wanders from the truth.  
We have no need of names and epitaphs ;  
We talk about the dead by our firesides.  
And then, for our immortal part ! *we* want  
No symbols, Sir, to tell us that plain tale :  
The thought of death sits easy on the man  
Who has been born and dies among the mountains.

*Leonard.* Your Dalesmen, then, do in each other's  
thoughts  
Possess a kind of second life : no doubt  
You, Sir, could help me to the history  
Of half these graves ?

*Priest.* For eightscore winters past,

With what I've witnessed, and with what I've heard,  
 Perhaps I might ; and, on a winter-evening,  
 If you were seated at my chimney's nook,  
 By turning o'er these hillocks one by one,  
 We two could travel, Sir, through a strange round ;  
 Yet all in the broad highway of the world.  
 Now there's a grave—your foot is half upon it,—  
 It looks just like the rest ; and yet that man  
 Died broken-hearted.

*Leonard.*

'Tis a common case.

We'll take another : who is he that lies  
 Beneath yon ridge, the last of those three graves ?  
 It touches on that piece of native rock  
 Left in the churchyard wall.

*Priest.*

That's Walter Ewbank.

He had as white a head and fresh a cheek  
 As ever were produced by youth and age  
 Engendering in the blood of hale fourscore.  
 Through five long generations had the heart  
 Of Walter's forefathers o'erflowed the bounds  
 Of their inheritance, that single cottage—  
 You see it yonder ! and those few green fields.  
 They toiled and wrought, and still, from sire to son,  
 Each struggled, and each yielded as before  
 A little—yet a little,—and old Walter,  
 They left to him the family heart, and land  
 With other burthens than the crop it bore.  
 Year after year the old man still kept up  
 A cheerful mind,—and buffeted with bond,  
 Interest, and mortgages ; at last he sank,  
 And went into his grave before his time.  
 Poor Walter ! whether it was care that spurred him  
 God only knows, but to the very last  
 He had the lightest foot in Ennerdale :  
 His pace was never that of an old man :  
 I almost see him tripping down the path  
 With his two grandsons after him :—but you,  
 Unless our Landlord be your host to-night,  
 Have far to travel,—and on these rough paths  
 Even in the longest day of midsummer—

*Leonard.* But those two Orphans !

*Priest.*

Orphans !—Such they were—

Yet not while Walter lived : for, though their parents  
 Lay buried side by side as now they lie,  
 The old man was a father to the boys,

Two fathers in one father : and if tears,  
Shed when he talked of them where they were not,  
And hauntings from the infirmity of love,  
Are aught of what makes up a mother's heart,  
This old Man, in the day of his old age,  
Was half a mother to them.—If you weep, Sir,  
To hear a stranger talking about strangers,  
Heaven bless you when you are among your kindred !  
Ay—you may turn that way—it is a grave  
Which will bear looking at.

*Leonard.* These boys—I hope  
They loved this good old Man?—

*Priest.* They did—and truly :

But that was what we almost overlooked,  
They were such darlings of each other. Yes,  
Though from the cradle they had lived with Walter,  
The only kinsman near them, and though he  
Inclined to both by reason of his age,  
With a more fond, familiar tenderness ;  
They, notwithstanding, had much love to spare,  
And it all went into each other's hearts.  
Leonard, the elder by just eighteen months,  
Was two years taller : 'twas a joy to see,  
To hear, to meet them !—From their house the school  
Is distant three short miles, and in the time  
Of storm and thaw, when every watercourse  
And unbridged stream, such as you may have noticed  
Crossing our roads at every hundred steps,  
Was swoln into a noisy rivulet,  
Would Leonard then, when elder boys remained  
At home, go staggering through the slippery fords,  
Bearing his brother on his back. I have seen him,  
On windy days, in one of those stray brooks,  
Ay, more than once I have seen him, mid-leg deep,  
Their two books lying both on a dry stone,  
Upon the hither side : and once I said,  
As I remember, looking round these rocks  
And hills on which we all of us were born,  
That God who made the great book of the world  
Would bless such piety—

*Leonard.* It may be then—

*Priest.* Never did worthier lads break English bread :  
The very brightest Sunday Autumn saw  
With all its mealy clusters of ripe nuts,  
Could never keep those boys away from church,

Or tempt them to an hour of sabbath breach.  
 Leonard and James! I warrant, every corner  
 Among these rocks, and every hollow place  
 That venturous foot could reach, to one or both  
 Was known as well as to the flowers that grow there.  
 Like roe-bucks they went bounding o'er the hills;  
 They played like two young ravens on the crags:  
 Then they could write, ay and speak too, as well  
 As many of their betters—and for Leonard!  
 The very night before he went away,  
 In my own house I put into his hand  
 A Bible, and I'd wager house and field  
 That, if he be alive, he has it yet.

*Leonard.* It seems, these Brothers have not lived to be  
 A comfort to each other—

*Priest.* That they might  
 Live to such end is what both old and young  
 In this our valley all of us have wished,  
 And what, for my part, I have often prayed:  
 But Leonard—

*Leonard.* Then James still is left among you!

*Priest.* 'Tis of the elder brother I am speaking:  
 They had an uncle;—he was at that time  
 A thriving man, and trafficked on the seas:  
 And, but for that same uncle, to this hour  
 Leonard had never handled rope or shroud:  
 For the boy loved the life which we lead here;  
 And though of unripe years, a stripling only,  
 His soul was knit to this his native soil.  
 But, as I said, old Walter was too weak  
 To strive with such a torrent; when he died,  
 The estate and house were sold; and all their sheep,  
 A pretty flock, and which, for aught I know,  
 Had clothed the Ewbanks for a thousand years:—  
 Well—all was gone, and they were destitute,  
 And Leonard, chiefly for his Brother's sake,  
 Resolved to try his fortune on the seas.  
 Twelve years are past since we had tidings from him.  
 If there were one among us who had heard  
 That Leonard Ewbank was come home again,  
 From the Great Gavel,<sup>1</sup> down by Leeza's banks,

<sup>1</sup> The Great Gavel, so called, I imagine, from its resemblance to the gable end of a house, is one of the highest of the Cumberland mountains. It stands at the head of the several vales of Ennerdale, Wastdale, and Borrowdale.

The Leeza is a river which flows into the Lake of Ennerdale: on

And down the Enna, far as Egremont,  
The day would be a joyous festival ;  
And those two bells of ours, which there you see—  
Hanging in the open air—but, O good Sir !  
This is sad talk—they'll never sound for him—  
Living or dead.—When last we heard of him,  
He was in slavery among the Moors  
Upon the Barbary coast.—'Twas not a little  
That would bring down his spirit ; and no doubt,  
Before it ended in his death, the Youth  
Was sadly crossed.—Poor Leonard ! when we parted,  
He took me by the hand, and said to me,  
If e'er he should grow rich, he would return,  
To live in peace upon his father's land,  
And lay his bones among us.

*Leonard.* If that day  
Should come, 'twould needs be a glad day for him ;  
He would himself, no doubt, be happy then  
As any that should meet him—

*Priest.* Happy ! Sir—

*Leonard.* You said his kindred all were in their graves,  
And that he had one Brother—

*Priest.* That is but  
A fellow-tale of sorrow. From his youth  
James, though not sickly, yet was delicate ;  
And Leonard being always by his side  
Had done so many offices about him,  
That, though he was not of a timid nature,  
Yet still the spirit of a mountain-boy  
In him was somewhat checked ; and, when his Brother  
Was gone to sea, and he was left alone,  
The little colour that he had was soon  
Stolen from his cheek ; he drooped, and pined, and pined—

*Leonard.* But these are all the graves of full-grown men !

*Priest.* Ay, Sir, that passed away : we took him to us ;  
He was the child of all the dale—he lived  
Three months with one, and six months with another,  
And wanted neither food, nor clothes, nor love :  
And many, many happy days were his.  
But, whether blithe or sad, 'tis my belief  
His absent Brother still was at his heart.  
And, when he dwelt beneath our roof, we found  
(A practice till this time unknown to him)

issuing from the Lake, it changes its name, and is called the End,  
Eyne, or Enna. It falls into the sea a little below Egremont.

That often, rising from his bed at night,  
He in his sleep would walk about, and sleeping  
He sought his brother Leonard.—You are moved !  
Forgive me, Sir : before I spoke to you,  
I judged you most unkindly.

*Leonard.*

But this Youth,

How did he die at last ?

*Priest.*

One sweet May-morning,

(It will be twelve years since when Spring returns)  
He had gone forth among the new-dropped lambs,  
With two or three companions, whom their course  
Of occupation led from height to height  
Under a cloudless sun—till he, at length,  
Through weariness, or, haply, to indulge  
The humour of the moment, lagged behind.  
You see yon precipice ;—it wears the shape  
Of a vast building made of many crags ;  
And in the midst is one particular rock  
That rises like a column from the vale,  
Whence by our shepherds it is called, THE PILLAR.  
Upon its æry summit crowned with heath,  
The loiterer, not unnoticed by his comrades,  
Lay stretched at ease ; but, passing by the place  
On their return, they found that he was gone.  
No ill was feared ; till one of them by chance  
Entering, when evening was far spent, the house  
Which at that time was James's home, there learned  
That nobody had seen him all that day :  
The morning came, and still he was unheard of :  
The neighbours were alarmed, and to the brook  
Some hastened ; some ran to the lake : ere noon  
They found him at the foot of that same rock  
Dead, and with mangled limbs. The third day after  
I buried him, poor Youth, and there he lies !

*Leonard.* And that then is his grave !—Before his death  
You say that he saw many happy years ?

*Priest.* Ay, that he did—

*Leonard.*

And all went well with him ?—

*Priest.* If he had one, the Youth had twenty homes.

*Leonard.* And you believe, then, that his mind was easy ?—

*Priest.* Yes, long before he died, he found that time  
Is a true friend to sorrow ; and unless  
His thoughts were turned on Leonard's luckless fortune,  
He talked about him with a cheerful love.

*Leonard.* He could not come to an unhallowed end !

*Priest.* Nay, God forbid!—You recollect I mentioned  
A habit which disquietude and grief  
Had brought upon him; and we all conjectured  
That, as the day was warm, he had lain down  
On the soft heath,—and, waiting for his comrades,  
He there had fallen asleep; that in his sleep  
He to the margin of the precipice  
Had walked, and from the summit had fallen headlong:  
And so no doubt he perished. When the Youth  
Fell, in his hand he must have grasped, we think,  
His shepherd's staff; for on that Pillar of rock  
It had been caught mid-way; and there for years  
It hung;—and mouldered there.

The Priest here ended—

The Stranger would have thanked him, but he felt  
A gushing from his heart, that took away  
The power of speech. Both left the spot in silence;  
And Leonard, when they reached the churchyard gate,  
As the Priest lifted up the latch, turned round,—  
And, looking at the grave, he said, "My Brother!"  
The Vicar did not hear the words: and now,  
He pointed towards his dwelling-place, entreating  
That Leonard would partake his homely fare:  
The other thanked him with an earnest voice;  
But added, that, the evening being calm,  
He would pursue his journey. So they parted.

It was not long ere Leonard reached a grove  
That overhung the road: he there stopped short,  
And, sitting down beneath the trees, reviewed  
All that the Priest had said: his early years  
Were with him:—his long absence, cherished hopes,  
And thoughts which had been his an hour before,  
All pressed on him with such a weight, that now,  
This vale, where he had been so happy, seemed  
A place in which he could not bear to live:  
So he relinquished all his purposes.  
He travelled back to Egremont: and thence,  
That night, he wrote a letter to the Priest,  
Reminding him of what had passed between them:  
And adding, with a hope to be forgiven,  
That it was from the weakness of his heart  
He had not dared to tell him who he was.  
This done, he went on shipboard, and is now  
A Seaman, a grey-headed Mariner.

(1800)

## MICHAEL:

A PASTORAL POEM<sup>1</sup>

If from the public way you turn your steps  
 Up the tumultuous brook of Greenhead Ghyll,  
 You will suppose that with an upright path  
 Your feet must struggle; in such bold ascent  
 The pastoral mountains front you, face to face.  
 But, courage! for around that boisterous brook  
 The mountains have all opened out themselves,  
 And made a hidden valley of their own.  
 No habitation can be seen; but they  
 Who journey thither find themselves alone  
 With a few sheep, with rocks and stones, and kites  
 That overhead are sailing in the sky.  
 It is in truth an utter solitude;  
 Nor should I have made mention of this Dell  
 But for one object which you might pass by,  
 Might see and notice not. Beside the brook  
 Appears a straggling heap of unhewn stones!  
 And to that simple object appertains  
 A story—unenriched with strange events,  
 Yet not unfit, I deem, for the fireside,  
 Or for the summer shade. It was the first  
 Of those domestic tales that spake to me  
 Of shepherds, dwellers in the valleys, men  
 Whom I already loved; not verily  
 For their own sakes, but for the fields and hills  
 Where was their occupation and abode.  
 And hence this Tale, while I was yet a Boy  
 Careless of books, yet having felt the power  
 Of Nature, by the gentle agency  
 Of natural objects, led me on to feel  
 For passions that were not my own, and think  
 (At random and imperfectly indeed)  
 On man, the heart of man, and human life.

<sup>1</sup> Written at Town-end, Grasmere, about the same time as "The Brothers." The Sheepfold, on which so much of the poem turns, remains, or rather the ruins of it. The character and circumstances of Luke were taken from a family to whom had belonged, many years before, the house we lived in at Town-end, along with some fields and woodlands on the eastern shore of Grasmere. The name of the Evening Star was not in fact given to this house, but to another on the same side of the valley, more to the north.

Therefore, although it be a history  
Homely and rude, I will relate the same  
For the delight of a few natural hearts ;  
And, with yet fonder feeling, for the sake  
Of youthful Poets, who among these hills  
Will be my second self when I am gone.

UPON the forest-side in Grasmere Vale  
There dwelt a Shepherd, Michael was his name ;  
An old man, stout of heart, and strong of limb.  
His bodily frame had been from youth to age  
Of an unusual strength : his mind was keen,  
Intense, and frugal, apt for all affairs,  
And in his shepherd's calling he was prompt  
And watchful more than ordinary men.  
Hence had he learned the meaning of all winds,  
Of blasts of every tone ; and, oftentimes,  
When others heeded not, He heard the South  
Make subterraneous music, like the noise  
Of bagpipers on distant Highland hills.  
The Shepherd, at such warning, of his flock  
Bethought him, and he to himself would say,  
"The winds are now devising work for me !"  
And, truly, at all times, the storm, that drives  
The traveller to a shelter, summoned him  
Up to the mountains : he had been alone  
Amid the heart of many thousand mists,  
That came to him, and left him, on the heights.  
So lived he till his eightieth year was past.  
And grossly that man errs, who should suppose  
That the green valleys, and the streams and rocks,  
Were things indifferent to the Shepherd's thoughts.  
Fields, where with cheerful spirits he had breathed  
The common air ; hills, which with vigorous step  
He had so often climbed ; which had impressed  
So many incidents upon his mind  
Of hardship, skill or courage, joy or fear ;  
Which, like a book, preserved the memory  
Of the dumb animals, whom he had saved,  
Had fed or sheltered, linking to such acts  
The certainty of honourable gain ;  
Those fields, those hills—what could they less ? had laid  
Strong hold on his affections, were to him  
A pleasurable feeling of blind love,  
The pleasure which there is in life itself.

His days had not been passed in singleness.

His Helpmate was a comely matron, old—  
Though younger than himself full twenty years.  
She was a woman of a stirring life,  
Whose heart was in her house : two wheels she had  
Of antique form ; this large, for spinning wool ;  
That small, for flax ; and if one wheel had rest  
It was because the other was at work.  
The Pair had but one inmate in their house,  
An only Child, who had been born to them  
When Michael, telling o'er his years, began  
To deem that he was old,—in shepherd's phrase,  
With one foot in the grave. This only Son,  
With two brave sheep-dogs tried in many a storm,  
The one of an inestimable worth,  
Made all their household. I may truly say,  
That they were as a proverb in the vale  
For endless industry. When day was gone,  
And from their occupations out of doors  
The Son and Father were come home, even then,  
Their labour did not cease ; unless when all  
Turned to the cleanly supper-board, and there,  
Each with a mess of pottage and skimmed milk,  
Sat round the basket piled with oaten cakes,  
And their plain home-made cheese. Yet when the meal  
Was ended, Luke (for so the Son was named)  
And his old Father both betook themselves  
To such convenient work as might employ  
Their hands by the fireside ; perhaps to card  
Wool for the Housewife's spindle, or repair  
Some injury done to sickle, flail, or scythe,  
Or other implement of house or field.

Down from the ceiling, by the chimney's edge,  
That in our ancient uncouth country style  
With huge and black projection overbrowed  
Large space beneath, as duly as the light  
Of day grew dim the Housewife hung a lamp ;  
An aged utensil, which had performed  
Service beyond all others of its kind.  
Early at evening did it burn—and late,  
Surviving comrade of uncounted hours,  
Which, going by from year to year, had found,  
And left, the couple neither gay perhaps  
Nor cheerful, yet with objects and with hopes,  
Living a life of eager industry.  
And now, when Luke had reached his eighteenth year,

There by the light of this old lamp they sate,  
Father and Son, while far into the night  
The Housewife plied her own peculiar work,  
Making the cottage through the silent hours  
Murmur as with the sound of summer flies.  
This light was famous in its neighbourhood,  
And was a public symbol of the life  
That thrifty Pair had lived. For, as it chanced,  
Their cottage on a plot of rising ground  
Stood single, with large prospect, north and south,  
High into Easedale, up to Dunmail-Raise,  
And westward to the village near the lake ;  
And from this constant light, so regular  
And so far seen, the House itself, by all  
Who dwelt within the limits of the vale,  
Both old and young, was named THE EVENING STAR.

Thus living on through such a length of years,  
The Shepherd, if he loved himself, must needs  
Have loved his Helpmate ; but to Michael's heart  
This son of his old age was yet more dear—  
Less from instinctive tenderness, the same  
Fond spirit that blindly works in the blood of all—  
Than that a child, more than all other gifts  
That earth can offer to declining man,  
Brings hope with it, and forward-looking thoughts,  
And stirrings of inquietude, when they  
By tendency of nature needs must fail.  
Exceeding was the love he bare to him,  
His heart and his heart's joy ! For oftentimes  
Old Michael, while he was a babe in arms,  
Had done him female service, not alone  
For pastime and delight, as is the use  
Of fathers, but with patient mind enforced  
To acts of tenderness ; and he had rocked  
His cradle, as with a woman's gentle hand.

And, in a later time, ere yet the Boy  
Had put on boy's attire, did Michael love,  
Albeit of a stern unbending mind,  
To have the Young-one in his sight, when he  
Wrought in the field, or on his shepherd's stool  
Sate with a fettered sheep before him stretched  
Under the large old oak, that near his door  
Stood single, and, from matchless depth of shade,  
Chosen for the Shearer's covert from the sun,  
Thence in our rustic dialect was called

The CLIPPING TREE,<sup>1</sup> a name which yet it bears.  
 There, while they two were sitting in the shade,  
 With others round them, earnest all and blithe,  
 Would Michael exercise his heart with looks  
 Of fond correction and reproof bestowed  
 Upon the Child, if he disturbed the sheep  
 By catching at their legs, or with his shouts  
 Scared them, while they lay still beneath the shears.

And when by Heaven's good grace the boy grew up  
 A healthy Lad, and carried in his cheek  
 Two steady roses that were five years old ;  
 Then Michael from a winter coppice cut  
 With his own hand a sapling, which he hooped  
 With iron, making it throughout in all  
 Due requisites a perfect shepherd's staff,  
 And gave it to the Boy ; wherewith equip  
 He as a watchman oftentimes was placed  
 At gate or gap, to stem or turn the flock ;  
 And, to his office prematurely called,  
 There stood the urchin, as you will divine,  
 Something between a hindrance and a help ;  
 And for this cause not always, I believe,  
 Receiving from his Father hire of praise ;  
 Though nought was left undone which staff, or voice,  
 Or looks, or threatening gestures, could perform.

But soon as Luke, full ten years old, could stand  
 Against the mountain blasts ; and to the heights,  
 Not fearing toil, nor length of weary ways,  
 He with his Father daily went, and they  
 Were as companions, why should I relate  
 That objects which the Shepherd loved before  
 Were dearer now ? that from the Boy there came  
 Feelings and emanations—things which were  
 Light to the sun and music to the wind ;  
 And that the old Man's heart seemed born again ?

Thus in his Father's sight the Boy grew up :  
 And now, when he had reached his eighteenth year,  
 He was his comfort and his daily hope.

While in this sort the simple household lived  
 From day to day, to Michael's ear there came  
 Distressful tidings. Long before the time  
 Of which I speak, the Shepherd had been bound  
 In surety for his brother's son, a man

<sup>1</sup> Clipping is the word used in the North of England for shearing.

Of an industrious life, and ample means ;  
But unforeseen misfortunes suddenly  
Had prest upon him ; and old Michael now  
Was summoned to discharge the forfeiture,  
A grievous penalty, but little less  
Than half his substance. This unlooked-for claim,  
At the first hearing, for a moment took  
More hope out of his life than he supposed  
That any old man ever could have lost.  
As soon as he had armed himself with strength  
To look his trouble in the face, it seemed  
The Shepherd's sole resource to sell at once  
A portion of his patrimonial fields.  
Such was his first resolve ; he thought again,  
And his heart failed him. " Isabel," said he,  
Two evenings after he had heard the news,  
" I have been toiling more than seventy years,  
And in the open sunshine of God's love  
Have we all lived : yet if these fields of ours  
Should pass into a stranger's hand, I think  
That I could not lie quiet in my grave.  
Our lot is a hard lot ; the sun himself  
Has scarcely been more diligent than I ;  
And I have lived to be a fool at last  
To my own family. An evil man  
That was, and made an evil choice, if he  
Were false to us ; and if he were not false,  
There are ten thousand to whom loss like this  
Had been no sorrow. I forgive him ;—but  
'Twere better to be dumb than to talk thus.

When I began, my purpose was to speak  
Of remedies and of a cheerful hope.  
Our Luke shall leave us, Isabel ; the land  
Shall not go from us, and it shall be free ;  
He shall possess it, free as is the wind  
That passes over it. We have, thou know'st,  
Another kinsman—he will be our friend  
In this distress. He is a prosperous man,  
Thriving in trade—and Luke to him shall go,  
And with his kinsman's help and his own thrift  
He quickly will repair this loss, and then  
He may return to us. If here he stay,  
What can be done ? Where every one is poor,  
What can be gained ?"

At this the old Man paused,

And Isabel sat silent, for her mind  
 Was busy, looking back into past times.  
 There's Richard Bateman, thought she to herself,  
 He was a parish-boy—at the church-door  
 They made a gathering for him, shillings; pence  
 And halfpennies, wherewith the neighbours bought  
 A basket, which they filled with pedlar's wares;  
 And, with this basket on his arm, the lad  
 Went up to London, found a master there,  
 Who, out of many, chose the trusty boy  
 To go and overlook his merchandise  
 Beyond the seas; where he grew wondrous rich,  
 And left estates and monies to the poor.  
 And, at his birth-place, built a chapel, floored  
 With marble which he sent from foreign lands.  
 These thoughts, and many others of like sort,  
 Passed quickly through the mind of Isabel,  
 And her face brightened. The old Man was glad,  
 And thus resumed:—"Well, Isabel! this scheme  
 These two days, has been meat and drink to me.  
 Far more than we have lost is left us yet.  
 —We have enough—I wish indeed that I  
 Were younger;—but this hope is a good hope.  
 —Make ready Luke's best garments, of the best  
 Buy for him more, and let us send him forth  
 To-morrow, or the next day, or to-night:  
 —If he *could* go, the Boy should go to-night."

Here Michael ceased, and to the fields went forth  
 With a light heart. The Housewife for five days  
 Was restless morn and night, and all day long  
 Wrought on with her best fingers to prepare  
 Things needful for the journey of her son.  
 But Isabel was glad when Sunday came  
 To stop her in her work: for, when she lay  
 By Michael's side, she through the last two nights  
 Heard him, how he was troubled in his sleep:  
 And when they rose at morning she could see  
 That all his hopes were gone. That day at noon  
 She said to Luke, while they two by themselves  
 Were sitting at the door, "Thou must not go:  
 We have no other Child but thee to lose,  
 None to remember—do not go away,  
 For if thou leave thy Father he will die."  
 The Youth made answer with a jocund voice;  
 And Isabel, when she had told her fears,

Recovered heart. That evening her best fare  
Did she bring forth, and all together sat  
Like happy people round a Christmas fire.

With daylight Isabel resumed her work ;  
And all the ensuing week the house appeared  
As cheerful as a grove in Spring : at length  
The expected letter from their kinsman came,  
With kind assurances that he would do  
His utmost for the welfare of the Boy ;  
To which, requests were added, that forthwith  
He might be sent to him. Ten times or more  
The letter was read over ; Isabel  
Went forth to show it to the neighbours round ;  
Nor was there at that time on English land  
A prouder heart than Luke's. When Isabel  
Had to her house returned, the old Man said,  
" He shall depart to-morrow." To this word  
The Housewife answered, talking much of things  
Which, if at such short notice he should go,  
Would surely be forgotten. But at length  
She gave consent, and Michael was at ease.

Near the tumultuous brook of Greenhead Ghyll,  
In that deep valley, Michael had designed  
To build a Sheepfold ; and, before he heard  
The tidings of his melancholy loss,  
For this same purpose he had gathered up  
A heap of stones, which by the streamlet's edge  
Lay thrown together, ready for the work.  
With Luke that evening thitherward he walked :  
And soon as they had reached the place he stopped,  
And thus the old Man spake to him :—" My Son,  
To-morrow thou wilt leave me : with full heart  
I look upon thee, for thou art the same  
That wert a promise to me ere thy birth,  
And all thy life hast been my daily joy.  
I will relate to thee some little part  
Of our two histories ; 'twill do thee good  
When thou art from me, even if I should touch  
On things thou canst not know of.—After thou  
First cam'st into the world—as oft befalls  
To new-born infants—thou didst sleep away  
Two days, and blessings from thy Father's tongue  
Then fell upon thee. Day by day passed on,  
And still I loved thee with increasing love.  
Never to living ear came sweeter sounds

Than when I heard thee by our own fireside  
 First uttering, without words, a natural tune ;  
 While thou, a feeding babe, didst in thy joy  
 Sing at thy Mother's breast. Month followed month,  
 And in the open fields my life was passed  
 And on the mountains ; else I think that thou  
 Hadst been brought up upon thy Father's knees.  
 But we were playmates, Luke : among these hills,  
 As well thou knowest, in us the old and young  
 Have played together, nor with me didst thou  
 Lack any pleasure which a boy can know."  
 Luke had a manly heart ; but at these words  
 He sobbed aloud. The old Man grasped his hand,  
 And said, " Nay, do not take it so—I see  
 That these are things of which I need not speak.  
 —Even to the utmost I have been to thee  
 A kind and a good Father : and herein  
 I but repay a gift which I myself  
 Received at others' hands ; for, though now old  
 Beyond the common life of man, I still  
 Remember them who loved me in my youth.  
 Both of them sleep together : here they lived,  
 As all their Forefathers had done ; and when  
 At length their time was come, they were not loth  
 To give their bodies to the family mould.  
 I wished that thou should'st live the life they lived :  
 But, 'tis a long time to look back, my Son,  
 And see so little gain from threescore years.  
 These fields were burthened when they came to me ;  
 Till I was forty years of age, not more  
 Than half of my inheritance was mine.  
 I toiled and toiled ; God blessed me in my work,  
 And till these three weeks past the land was free.  
 —It looks as if it never could endure  
 Another Master. Heaven forgive me, Luke,  
 If I judge ill for thee, but it seems good  
 That thou should'st go."

At this the old Man paused ;  
 Then, pointing to the stones near which they stood,  
 Thus, after a short silence, he resumed :  
 " This was a work for us ; and now, my Son,  
 It is a work for me. But, lay one stone—  
 Here, lay it for me, Luke, with thine own hands.  
 Nay, Boy, be of good hope ;—we both may live  
 To see a better day. At eighty-four

I still am strong and hale ;—do thou thy part ;  
I will do mine.—I will begin again  
With many tasks that were resigned to thee :  
Up to the heights, and in among the storms,  
Will I without thee go again, and do  
All works which I was wont to do alone,  
Before I knew thy face.—Heaven bless thee, Boy !  
Thy heart these two weeks has been beating fast  
With many hopes ; it should be so—yes—yes—  
I knew that thou could'st never have a wish  
To leave me, Luke : thou hast been bound to me  
Only by links of love : when thou art gone,  
What will be left to us !—But, I forget  
My purposes. Lay now the corner-stone,  
As I requested ; and hereafter, Luke,  
When thou art gone away, should evil men  
Be thy companions, think of me, my Son,  
And of this moment ; hither turn thy thoughts,  
And God will strengthen thee : amid all fear  
And all temptation, Luke, I pray that thou  
May'st bear in mind the life thy Fathers lived,  
Who, being innocent, did for that cause  
Bestir them in good deeds. Now, fare thee well—  
When thou return'st, thou in this place wilt see  
A work which is not here : a covenant  
'Twill be between us ; but, whatever fate  
Befall thee, I shall love thee to the last,  
And bear thy memory with me to the grave.”

The Shepherd ended here ; and Luke stooped down,  
And, as his Father had requested, laid  
The first stone of the Sheepfold. At the sight  
The old Man's grief broke from him ; to his heart  
He pressed his Son, he kissed him and wept ;  
And to the house together they returned.  
—Hushed was that House in peace, or seeming peace,  
Ere the night fell :—with morrow's dawn the Boy  
Began his journey, and when he had reached  
The public way, he put on a bold face ;  
And all the neighbours, as he passed their doors,  
Came forth with wishes and with farewell prayers,  
That followed him till he was out of sight.

A good report did from their Kinsman come,  
Of Luke and his well-doing : and the Boy  
Wrote loving letters, full of wondrous news,  
Which, as the Housewife phrased it, were throughout

"The prettiest letters that were ever seen."  
Both parents read them with rejoicing hearts.  
So, many months passed on : and once again  
The Shepherd went about his daily work  
With confident and cheerful thoughts ; and now  
Sometimes when he could find a leisure hour  
He to that valley took his way, and there  
Wrought at the Sheepfold. Meantime Luke began  
To slacken in his duty ; and, at length,  
He in the dissolute city gave himself  
To evil courses : ignominy and shame  
Fell on him, so that he was driven at last  
To seek a hiding-place beyond the seas.

There is a comfort in the strength of love ;  
'Twill make a thing endurable, which else  
Would overset the brain, or break the heart :  
I have conversed with more than one who well  
Remember the old Man, and what he was  
Years after he had heard this heavy news.  
His bodily frame had been from youth to age  
Of an unusual strength. Among the rocks  
He went, and still looked up to sun and cloud,  
And listened to the wind ; and, as before,  
Performed all kinds of labour for his sheep,  
And for the land, his small inheritance.  
And to that hollow dell from time to time  
Did he repair, to build the Fold of which  
His flock had need. 'Tis not forgotten yet  
The pity which was then in every heart  
For the old Man—and 'tis believed by all  
That many and many a day he thither went,  
And never lifted up a single stone.

There, by the Sheepfold, sometimes was he seen  
Sitting alone, or with his faithful Dog,  
Then old, beside him, lying at his feet.  
The length of full seven years, from time to time,  
He at the building of this Sheepfold wrought,  
And left the work unfinished when he died.  
Three years, or little more, did Isabel  
Survive her Husband : at her death the estate  
Was sold, and went into a stranger's hand.  
The Cottage which was named the EVENING STAR  
Is gone—the ploughshare has been through the ground  
On which it stood ; great changes have been wrought  
In all the neighbourhood :—yet the oak is left

That grew beside their door; and the remains  
Of the unfinished Sheepfold may be seen  
Beside the boisterous brook of Greenhead Ghyll.  
(1800)

## THE PRIORESS'S TALE

FROM CHAUCER<sup>1</sup>

"Call up him who left half told  
The story of Cambuscan bold."

## I

"O LORD, our Lord! how wondrously," (quoth she)  
"Thy name in this large world is spread abroad!  
For not alone by men of dignity  
Thy worship is performed and precious laud;  
But by the mouths of children, gracious God!  
Thy goodness is set forth; they when they lie  
Upon the breast thy name do glorify."

## II

"Wherefore in praise, the worthiest that I may,  
Jesu! of thee, and the white Lily-flower  
Which did thee bear, and is a Maid for aye,  
To tell a story I will use my power;  
Not that I may increase her honour's dower,  
For she herself is honour, and the root  
Of goodness, next her Son, our soul's best boot."

## III

"O Mother Maid! O Maid and Mother free!  
O bush unburnt! burning in Moses' sight!  
That down didst ravish from the Deity,  
Through humbleness, the spirit that did alight  
Upon thy heart, whence, through that glory's might,  
Conceived was the Father's sapience,  
Help me to tell it in thy reverence!"

<sup>1</sup> In the following Poem no further deviation from the original has been made than was necessary for the fluent reading and instant understanding of the Author: so much, however, is the language altered since Chaucer's time, especially in pronunciation, that much was to be removed, and its place supplied with as little incongruity as possible. The ancient accent has been retained in a few conjunctions, as *also* and *alway*, from a conviction that such sprinklings of antiquity would be admitted, by persons of taste, to have a graceful accordance with the subject. The fierce bigotry of the Prioress forms a fine background for her tender-hearted sympathies with the Mother and Child; and the mode in which the story is told amply atones for the extravagance of the miracle.

## IV

"Lady ! thy goodness, thy magnificence,  
Thy virtue, and thy great humility,  
Surpass all science and all utterance ;  
For sometimes, Lady ! ere men pray to thee  
Thou goest before in thy benignity,  
The light to us vouchsafing of thy prayer,  
To be our guide unto thy Son so dear.

## V

"My knowledge is so weak, O blissful Queen !  
To tell abroad thy mighty worthiness,  
That I the weight of it may not sustain ;  
But as a child of twelvemonths old or less,  
That laboureth his language to express,  
Even so fare I ; and therefore, I thee pray,  
Guide thou my song which I of thee shall say.

## VI

"There was in Asia, in a mighty town,  
'Mong Christian folk, a street where Jews might be,  
Assigned to them and given them for their own  
By a great Lord, for gain and usury,  
Hateful to Christ and to his company ;  
And through this street who list might ride and wend :  
Free was it, and unbarred at either end.

## VII

"A little school of Christian people stood  
Down at the farther end, in which there were  
A nest of children come of Christian blood,  
That learned in that school from year to year  
Such sort of doctrine as men used there,  
That is to say, to sing and read alsò,  
As little children in their childhood do.

## VIII

"Among these children was a Widow's son,  
A little scholar, scarcely seven years old,  
Who day by day unto this school hath gone,  
And eke, when he the image did behold  
Of Jesu's Mother, as he had been told,  
This Child was wont to kneel adown and say  
*Ave Marie*, as he goeth by the way.

## IX

"This Widow thus her little Son hath taught  
Our blissful Lady, Jesu's Mother dear,  
To worship aye, and he forgot it not ;  
For simple infant hath a ready ear.  
Sweet is the holiness of youth : and hence,  
Calling to mind this matter when I may,  
Saint Nicholas in my presence standeth aye,  
For he so young to Christ did reverence.

## X

"This little Child, while in the school he sate  
His Primer conning with an earnest cheer,  
The whilst the rest their anthem-book repeat  
The *Alma Redemptoris* did he hear ;  
And as he durst he drew him near and near,  
And hearkened to the words and to the note,  
Till the first verse he learned it all by rote.

## XI

"This Latin knew he nothing what it said,  
For he too tender was of age to know ;  
But to his comrade he repaired, and prayed  
That he the meaning of this song would show,  
And unto him declare why men sing so ;  
This oftentimes, that he might be at ease,  
The child did him beseech on his bare knees.

## XII

"His Schoolfellow, who elder was than he,  
Answered him thus :—'This song, I have heard say,  
Was fashioned for our blissful Lady free ;  
Her to salute, and also her to pray  
To be our help upon our dying day :  
If there is more in this, I know it not ;  
Song do I learn,—small grammar I have got.'

## XIII

"'And is this song fashioned in reverence  
Of Jesu's Mother?' said this Innocent ;  
'Now, certès, I will use my diligence  
To con it all ere Christmas-tide be spent ;  
Although I for my Primer shall be shent,  
And shall be beaten three times in an hour,  
Our Lady I will praise with all my power.'

## XIV

"His Schoolfellow, whom he had so besought,  
As they went homeward taught him privily,  
And then he sang it well and fearlessly,  
From word to word according to the note :  
Twice in a day it passèd through his throat ;  
Homeward and schoolward whensoever he went,  
On Jesu's Mother fixed was his intent.

## XV

"Through all the Jewry (this before said I)  
This little Child, as he came to and fro,  
Full merrily then would he sing and cry,  
*O Alma Redemptoris !* high and low :  
The sweetness of Christ's Mother piercèd so  
His heart, that her to praise, to her to pray,  
He cannot stop his singing by the way.

## XVI

"The Serpent, Satan, our first foe, that hath  
His wasp's nest in Jew's heart, upswellèd—'O woe,  
O Hebrew people !' said he in his wrath,  
'Is it an honest thing? Shall this be so?  
That such a Boy where'er he lists shall go  
In your despite, and sing his hymns and saws,  
Which is against the reverence of our laws !'

## XVII

"From that day forward have the Jews conspired  
Out of the world this Innocent to chase ;  
And to this end a Homicide they hired,  
That in an alley had a privy place,  
And, as the Child 'gan to the school to pace,  
This cruel Jew him seized, and held him fast  
And cut his throat, and in a pit him cast.

## XVIII

"I say that him into a pit they threw,  
A loathsome pit, whence noisome scents exhale ;  
O cursèd folk ! away, ye Herods new !  
What may your ill intentions you avail ?  
Murder will out ; certès it will not fail ;  
Know, that the honour of high God may spread,  
The blood cries out on your accursèd deed.

## XIX

"O Martyr 'stablished in virginity !  
Now may'st thou sing for aye before the throne,  
Following the Lamb celestial," quoth she,  
"Of which the great Evangelist, Saint John,  
In Patmos wrote, who saith of them that go  
Before the Lamb singing continually,  
That never fleshly woman they did know.

## XX

"Now this poor widow waiteth all that night  
After her little Child, and he came not ;  
For which, by earliest glimpse of morning light,  
With face all pale with dread and busy thought,  
She at the School and elsewhere him hath sought  
Until thus far she learned, that he had been  
In the Jews' street, and there he last was seen.

## XXI

"With Mother's pity in her breast enclosed  
She goeth, as she were half out of her mind,  
To every place wherein she hath supposed  
By likelihood her little Son to find ;  
And ever on Christ's Mother meek and kind  
She cried, till to the Jewry she was brought,  
And him among the accursèd Jews she sought.

## XXII

"She asketh, and she piteously doth pray  
To every Jew that dwelleth in that place  
To tell her if her child had passed that way ;  
They all said—Nay ; but Jesu of his grace  
Gave to her thought, that in a little space  
She for her Son in that same spot did cry  
Where he was cast into a pit hard by.

## XXIII

"O thou great God that dost perform thy laud  
By mouths of Innocents, lo ! here thy might ;  
This gem of chastity, this emerald,  
And eke of martyrdom this ruby bright,  
There, where with mangled throat he lay upright,  
The *Alma Redemptoris* gan to sing,  
So loud, that with his voice the place did ring.

## XXIV

"The Christian folk that through the Jewry went  
 Come to the spot in wonder at the thing ;  
 And hastily they for the Provost sent ;  
 Immediately he came, not tarrying,  
 And praiseth Christ that is our heavenly King,  
 And eke his Mother, honour of Mankind :  
 Which done he bade that they the Jews should bind.

## XXV

"This Child with piteous lamentation then  
 Was taken up, singing his song alway ;  
 And with procession great and pomp of men  
 To the next Abbey him they bare away ;  
 His Mother swooning by the body lay :  
 And scarcely could the people that were near  
 Remove this second Rachel from the bier.

## XXVI

"Torment and shameful death to every one  
 This Provost doth for those bad Jews prepare  
 That of this murder wist, and that anon :  
 Such wickedness his judgments cannot spare ;  
 Who will do evil, evil shall he bear ;  
 Them therefore with wild horses did he draw,  
 And after that he hung them by the law.

## XXVII

"Upon his bier this Innocent doth lie  
 Before the altar while the Mass doth last :  
 The Abbot with his convent's company  
 Then sped themselves to bury him full fast ;  
 And, when they holy water on him cast,  
 Yet spake this Child when sprinkled was the water,  
 And sang, *O Alma Redemptoris Mater !*

## XXVIII

"This Abbot, for he was a holy man,  
 As all Monks are, or surely ought to be,  
 In supplication to the Child began  
 Thus saying, 'O dear Child ! I summon thee  
 In virtue of the holy Trinity  
 Tell me the cause why thou dost sing this hymn  
 Since that thy throat is cut, as it doth seem.'

## XXIX

"My throat is cut unto the bone, I trow,"  
Said this young Child, "and by the law of kind  
I should have died, yea many hours ago ;  
But Jesus Christ, as in the books ye find,  
Will that his glory last, and be in mind ;  
And, for the worship of his Mother dear,  
Yet may I sing O *Álma* ! loud and clear.

## XXX

"This well of mercy, Jesu's Mother sweet,  
After my knowledge I have loved alway ;  
And in the hour when I my death did meet  
To me she came, and thus to me did say,  
'Thou in thy dying sing this holy lay,'  
As ye have heard ; and soon as I had sung  
Methought she laid a grain upon my tongue.

## XXXI

"Wherefore I sing, nor can from song refrain,  
In honour of that blissful Maiden free,  
Till from my tongue off-taken is the grain ;  
And after that thus said she unto me ;  
'My little Child, then will I come for thee  
Soon as the grain from off thy tongue they take :  
Be not dismayed, I will not thee forsake !"

## XXXII

"This holy Monk, this Abbot—him mean I,  
Touched then his tongue, and took away the grain ;  
And he gave up the ghost full peacefully ;  
And, when the Abbot had this wonder seen,  
His salt tears trickled down like showers of rain ;  
And on his face he dropped upon the ground,  
And still he lay as if he had been bound.

## XXXIII

"Eke the whole Convent on the pavement lay,  
Weeping and praising Jesu's Mother dear ;  
And after that they rose, and took their way,  
And lifted up this Martyr from the bier,  
And in a tomb of precious marble clear  
Enclosed his uncorrupted body sweet.—  
Where'er he be, God grant us him to meet !

## XXXIV

"Young Hew of Lincoln! in like sort laid low  
 By curs'd Jews—thing well and widely known,  
 For it was done a little while ago—  
 Pray also thou for us, while here we tarry  
 Weak sinful folk, that God, with pitying eye,  
 In mercy would his mercy multiply  
 On us, for reverence of his Mother Mary!"

'1801)

## THE CUCKOO AND THE NIGHTINGALE

FROM CHAUCER

## I

THE God of Love,—*ah, benedicite!*  
 How mighty and how great a Lord is he!  
 For he of low hearts can make high, of high  
 He can make low, and unto death bring nigh;  
 And hard hearts he can make them kind and free.

## II

Within a little time, as hath been found,  
 He can make sick folk whole and fresh and sound:  
 Them who are whole in body and in mind,  
 He can make sick,—bind can he and unbind  
 All that he will have bound, or have unbound.

## III

To tell his might my wit may not suffice;  
 Foolish men he can make them out of wise;—  
 For he may do all that he will devise;  
 Loose livers he can make abate their vice,  
 And proud hearts can make tremble in a trice.

## IV

In brief, the whole of what he will, he may;  
 Against him dare not any wight say nay;  
 To humble or afflict whome'er he will,  
 To gladden or to grieve, he hath like skill;  
 But most his might he sheds on the eve of May.

## V

For every true heart, gentle heart and free,  
 That with him is, or thinketh so to be,  
 Now against May shall have some stirring—whether  
 To joy, or be it to some mourning; never  
 At other time, methinks, in like degree.

# The Cuckoo and the Nightingale 119

## VI

For now when they may hear the small birds' song,  
And see the budding leaves the branches throng,  
This unto their remembrance doth bring  
All kinds of pleasure mixed with sorrowing ;  
And longing of sweet thoughts that ever long.

## VII

And of that longing heaviness doth come,  
Whence oft great sickness grows of heart and home :  
Sick are they all for lack of their desire ;  
And thus in May their hearts are set on fire,  
So that they burn forth in great martyrdom.

## VIII

In sooth, I speak from feeling, what though now  
Old am I, and to genial pleasure slow ;  
Yet have I felt of sickness through the May,  
Both hot and cold, and heart-aches every day,—  
How hard, alas ! to bear, I only know.

## IX

Such shaking doth the fever in me keep  
Through all this May that I have little sleep ;  
And also 'tis not likely unto me,  
That any living heart should sleepy be  
In which Love's dart its fiery point doth steep.

## X

But tossing lately on a sleepless bed,  
I of a token thought which Lovers heed ;  
How among them it was a common tale,  
That it was good to hear the Nightingale,  
Ere the vile Cuckoo's note be uttered.

## XI

And then I thought anon as it was day,  
I gladly would go somewhere to essay  
If I perchance a Nightingale might hear,  
For yet had I heard none, of all that year,  
And it was then the third night of the May.

## XII

And soon as I a glimpse of day espied,  
No longer would I in my bed abide,  
But straightway to a wood that was hard by,  
Forth did I go, alone and fearlessly,  
And held the pathway down by a brook-side ;

## XIII

Till to a lawn I came all white and green,  
 I in so fair a one had never been.  
 The ground was green, with daisy powdered over ;  
 Tall were the flowers, the grove a lofty cover,  
 All green and white ; and nothing else was seen.

## XIV

There sate I down among the fair fresh flowers,  
 And saw the birds come tripping from their bowers,  
 Where they had rested them all night ; and they,  
 Who were so joyful at the light of day,  
 Began to honour May with all their powers.

## XV

Well did they know that service all by rote,  
 And there was many and many a lovely note,  
 Some, singing loud, as if they had complained ;  
 Some with their notes another manner feigned ;  
 And some did sing all out with the full throat.

## XVI

They pruned themselves, and made themselves right gay,  
 Dancing and leaping light upon the spray ;  
 And ever two and two together were,  
 The same as they had chosen for the year,  
 Upon Saint Valentine's returning day.

## XVII

Meanwhile the stream, whose bank I sate upon,  
 Was making such a noise as it ran on  
 Accordant to the sweet Birds' harmony ;  
 Methought that it was the best melody  
 Which ever to man's ear a passage won.

## XVIII

And for delight, but how I never wot,  
 I in a slumber and a swoon was caught,  
 Not all asleep and yet not waking wholly ;  
 And as I lay, the Cuckoo, bird unholy,  
 Broke silence, or I heard him in my thought.

## XIX

And that was right upon a tree fast by,  
 And who was then ill satisfied but I ?  
 Now, God, quoth I, that died upon the rood,  
 From thee and thy base throat, keep all that's good,  
 Full little joy have I now of thy cry.

## The Cuckoo and the Nightingale 121

### XX

And, as I with the Cuckoo thus 'gan chide,  
In the next bush that was me fast beside,  
I heard the lusty Nightingale so sing,  
That her clear voice made a loud rioting,  
Echoing thorough all the green wood wide.

### XXI

Ah! good sweet Nightingale! for my heart's cheer,  
Hence hast thou stayed a little while too long;  
For we have had the sorry Cuckoo here,  
And she hath been before thee with her song;  
Evil light on her! she hath done me wrong.

### XXII

But hear you now a wondrous thing, I pray;  
As long as in that swooning-fit I lay,  
Methought I wist right well what these birds meant,  
And had good knowing both of their intent,  
And of their speech, and all that they would say.

### XXIII

The Nightingale thus in my hearing spake:—  
Good Cuckoo, seek some other bush or brake,  
And, prithee, let us that can sing dwell here;  
For every wight eschews thy song to hear,  
Such uncouth singing verily dost thou make.

### XXIV

What! quoth she then, what is't that ails thee now?  
It seems to me I sing as well as thou;  
For mine's a song that is both true and plain,—  
Although I cannot quaver so in vain  
As thou dost in thy throat, I wot not how.

### XXV

All men may understanding have of me,  
But, Nightingale, so may they not of thee;  
For thou hast many a foolish and quaint cry:—  
Thou say'st OSEE, OSEE, then how may I  
Have knowledge, I thee pray, what this may be?

### XXVI

Ah, fool! quoth she, wist thou not what it is?  
Oft as I say OSEE, OSEE, I wis,  
Then mean I, that I should be wonderous fain  
That shamefully they one and all were slain,  
Whoever against Love mean aught amiss.

## XXVII

And also would I that they all were dead,  
 Who do not think in love their life to lead ;  
 For who is loth the God of Love to obey,  
 Is only fit to die, I dare well say,  
 And for that cause OSEE I cry ; take heed !

## XXVIII

Ay, quoth the Cuckoo, that is a quaint law,  
 That all must love or die ; but I withdraw,  
 And take my leave of all such company,  
 For mine intent it neither is to die,  
 Nor ever while I live Love's yoke to draw.

## XXIX

For lovers of all folk that be alive,  
 The most disquiet have and least do thrive ;  
 Most feeling have of sorrow, woe, and care,  
 And the least welfare cometh to their share ;  
 What need is there against the truth to strive ?

## XXX

What ! quoth she, thou art all out of thy mind,  
 That in thy churlishness a cause canst find  
 To speak of Love's true Servants in this mood ;  
 For in this world no service is so good  
 To every wight that gentle is of kind.

## XXXI

For thereof comes all goodness and all worth ;  
 All gentleness and honour thence come forth ;  
 Thence worship comes, content and true heart's pleasure,  
 And full-assured trust, joy without measure,  
 And jollity, fresh cheerfulness, and mirth ;

## XXXII

And bounty, lowliness, and courtesy,  
 And seemliness, and faithful company,  
 And dread of shame that will not do amiss ;  
 For he that faithfully Love's servant is,  
 Rather than be disgraced, would chuse to die.

## XXXIII

And that the very truth it is which I  
 Now say—in such belief I'll live and die ;  
 And Cuckoo, do thou so, by my advice.  
 Then, quoth she, let me never hope for bliss,  
 If with that counsel I do e'er comply.

XXXIV

Good Nightingale ! thou speakest wondrous fair,  
Yet for all that, the truth is found elsewhere ;  
For Love in young folk is but rage, I wis :  
And Love in old folk a great dotage is ;  
Who most it useth, him 'twill most impair.

XXXV

For thereof come all contraries to gladness !  
Thence sickness comes, and overwhelming sadness,  
Mistrust and jealousy, despite, debate,  
Dishonour, shame, envy importunate,  
Pride, anger, mischief, poverty, and madness.

XXXVI

Loving is aye an office of despair,  
And one thing is therein which is not fair ;  
For whoso gets of love a little bliss,  
Unless it alway stay with him, I wis  
He may full soon go with an old man's hair.

XXXVII

And, therefore, Nightingale ! do thou keep nigh,  
For trust me well, in spite of thy quaint cry,  
If long time from thy mate thou be, or far,  
Thou'lt be as others that forsaken are ;  
Then shalt thou raise a clamour as do I.

XXXVIII

Fie, quoth she, on thy name, Bird ill beseen !  
The God of Love afflict thee with all teen,  
For thou art worse than mad a thousand fold ;  
For many a one hath virtues manifold,  
Who had been nought, if Love had never been.

XXXIX

For evermore his servants Love amendeth,  
And he from every blemish them defendeth ;  
And maketh them to burn, as in a fire,  
In loyalty, and worshipful desire,  
And, when it likes him, joy enough them sendeth.

XL

Thou Nightingale ! the Cuckoo said, be still,  
For Love no reason hath but his own will ;—  
For to th' untrue he oft gives ease and joy ;  
True lovers doth so bitterly annoy,  
He lets them perish through that grievous ill.

## XLI

With such a master would I never be ;<sup>1</sup>  
 For he, in sooth, is blind, and may not see,  
 And knows not when he hurts and when he heals ;  
 Within this court full seldom Truth avails,  
 So diverse in his wilfulness is he.

## XLII

Then of the Nightingale did I take note,  
 How from her inmost heart a sigh she brought,  
 And said, Alas ! that ever I was born,  
 Not one word have I now, I am so forlorn,—  
 And with that word, she into tears burst out.

## XLIII

Alas, alas ! my very heart will break,  
 Quoth she, to hear this churlish bird thus speak  
 Of Love, and of his holy services ;  
 Now, God of Love ; thou help me in some wise,  
 That vengeance on this Cuckoo I may wreak.

## XLIV

And so methought I started up anon,  
 And to the brook I ran and got a stone,  
 Which at the Cuckoo hardily I cast,  
 And he for dread did fly away full fast ;  
 And glad, in sooth, was I when he was gone.

## XLV

And as he flew, the Cuckoo, ever and aye,  
 Kept crying " Farewell !—farewell, Popinjay ! "  
 As if in scornful mockery of me ;  
 And on I hunted him from tree to tree,  
 Till he was far, all out of sight, away.

## XLVI

Then straightway came the Nightingale to me,  
 And said, Forsooth, my friend, do I thank thee,  
 That thou wert near to rescue me ; and now,  
 Unto the God of Love I make a vow,  
 That all this May I will thy songstress be.

<sup>1</sup> From a manuscript in the Bodleian, as are also stanzas 44 and 45, which are necessary to complete the sense.

XLVII

Well satisfied, I thanked her, and she said,  
By this mishap no longer be dismayed,  
Though thou the Cuckoo heard, ere thou heard'st me ;  
Yet if I live it shall amended be,  
When next May comes, if I am not afraid.

XLVIII

And one thing will I counsel thee also,  
The Cuckoo trust not thou, nor his Love's saw ;  
All that she said is an outrageous lie.  
Nay, nothing shall me bring thereto, quoth I,  
For Love, and it hath done me mighty woe.

XLIX

Yea, hath it? use, quoth she, this medicine ;  
This May-time, every day before thou dine,  
Go look on the fresh daisy ; then say I,  
Although for pain thou may'st be like to die,  
Thou wilt be eased, and less wilt droop and pine.

L

And mind always that thou be good and true,  
And I will sing one song, of many new,  
For love of thee, as loud as I may cry ;  
And then did she begin this song full high,  
"Beshrew all them that are in love untrue."

LI

And soon as she had sung it to the end,  
Now farewell, quoth she, for I hence must wend ;  
And, God of Love, that can right well and may,  
Send unto thee as mickle joy this day,  
As ever he to Lover yet did send.

LII

Thus takes the Nightingale her leave of me ;  
I pray to God with her always to be,  
And joy of love to send her evermore ;  
And shield us from the Cuckoo and her lore,  
For there is not so false a bird as she.

LIII

Forth then she flew, the gentle Nightingale,  
To all the Birds that lodged within that dale,  
And gathered each and all into one place ;  
And them besought to hear her doleful case,  
And thus it was that she began her tale.

## LIV

The Cuckoo—'tis not well that I should hide  
How she and I did each the other chide,  
And without ceasing, since it was daylight ;  
And now I pray you all to do me right  
Of that false Bird whom Love can not abide.

## LV

Then spake one Bird, and full assent all gave ;  
This matter asketh counsel good as grave,  
For birds we are—all here together brought ;  
And, in good sooth, the Cuckoo here is not ;  
And therefore we a Parliament will have.

## LVI

And thereat shall the Eagle be our Lord,  
And other Peers whose names are on record ;  
A summons to the Cuckoo shall be sent,  
And judgment there be given ; or that intent  
Failing, we finally shall make accord.

## LVII

And all this shall be done, without a nay,  
The morrow after Saint Valentine's day,  
Under a maple that is well beseen,  
Before the chamber-window of the Queen,  
At Woodstock, on the meadow green and gay.

## LVIII

She thanked them ; and then her leave she took,  
And flew into a hawthorn by that brook ;  
And there she sate and sung—upon that tree—  
" For term of life Love shall have hold of me "—  
So loudly, that I with that song awoke.

Unlearned Book and rude, as well I know,  
For beauty thou hast none, nor eloquence,  
Who did on thee the hardiness bestow  
To appear before my Lady? but a sense  
Thou surely hast of her benevolence,  
Whereof her hourly bearing proof doth give ;  
For of all good she is the best alive.

Alas, poor Book ! for thy unworthiness,  
To show to her some pleasant meanings writ  
In winning words, since through her gentleness,  
Thee she accepts as for her service fit !  
Oh ! it repents me I have neither wit

Nor leisure unto thee more worth to give ;  
For of all good she is the best alive.

Beseech her meekly with all lowliness,  
Though I be far from her I reverence,  
To think upon my truth and stedfastness,  
And to abridge my sorrow's violence,  
Caused by the wish, as knows your sapience,  
She of her liking proof to me would give ;  
For of all good she is the best alive.

## L'ENVOY

Pleasure's Aurora, Day of gladnessomeness !  
Luna by night, with heavenly influence  
Illumined ! root of beauty and goodness,  
Write, and allay, by your beneficence,  
My sighs breathed forth in silence,—comfort give !  
Since of all good, you are the best alive.

(1801)

## TROILUS AND CRESIDA

## FROM CHAUCER

NEXT morning Troilus began to clear  
His eyes from sleep, at the first break of day,  
And unto Pandarus, his own Brother dear,  
For love of God, full piteously did say,  
We must the Palace see of Cresida ;  
For since we yet may have no other feast,  
Let us behold her Palace at the least !

And therewithal to cover his intent  
A cause he found into the Town to go,  
And they right forth to Cresid's Palace went ;  
But, Lord, this simple Troilus was woe,  
Him thought his sorrowful heart would break in two ;  
For when he saw her doors fast bolted all,  
Well nigh for sorrow down he 'gan to fall.

Therewith when this true Lover 'gan behold,  
How shut was every window of the place,  
Like frost he thought his heart was icy cold ;  
For which, with changèd, pale, and deadly face,  
Without word uttered, forth he 'gan to pace ;  
And on his purpose bent so fast to ride,  
That no wight his continuance espied.

Then said he thus,—O Palace desolate !  
O house of houses, once so richly dight !  
O Palace empty and disconsolate !  
Thou lamp of which extinguished is the light ;  
O Palace whilom day that now art night,  
Thou ought'st to fall and I to die ; since she  
Is gone who held us both in sovereignty.

O, of all houses once the crownèd boast !  
Palace illumined with the sun of bliss ;  
O ring of which the ruby now is lost,  
O cause of woe, that cause has been of bliss :  
Yet, since I may no better, would I kiss  
Thy cold doors ; but I dare not for this rout ;  
Farewell, thou shrine of which the Saint is out.

Therewith he cast on Pandarus an eye,  
With changèd face, and piteous to behold ;  
And when he might his time aright espy,  
Aye as he rode, to Pandarus he told  
Both his new sorrow and his joys of old,  
So piteously, and with so dead a hue,  
That every wight might on his sorrow rue.

Forth from the spot he rideth up and down,  
And everything to his remembrance  
Came as he rode by places of the town  
Where he had felt such perfect pleasure once.  
Lo, yonder saw I mine own Lady dance,  
And in that Temple she with her bright eyes,  
My Lady dear, first bound me captive-wise.

And yonder with joy-smitten heart have I  
Heard my own Cresid's laugh ; and once at play  
I yonder saw her eke full blissfully ;  
And yonder once she unto me 'gan say—  
Now, my sweet Troilus, love me well, I pray !  
And there so graciously did me behold,  
That hers unto the death my heart I hold.

And at the corner of that self-same house  
Heard I my most belovèd Lady dear,  
So womanly, with voice melodious  
Singing so well, so goodly, and so clear,  
That in my soul methinks I yet do hear  
The blissful sound ; and in that very place  
My Lady first me took unto her grace.

O blissful God of Love ! then thus he cried,  
When I the process have in memory,  
How thou hast wearied me on every side,  
Men thence a book might make, a history ;  
What need to seek a conquest over me,  
Since I am wholly at thy will ? what joy  
Hast thou thy own liege subjects to destroy ?

Dread Lord ! so fearful when provoked, thine ire  
Well hast thou wreaked on me by pain and grief.  
Now mercy, Lord ! thou know'st well I desire  
Thy grace above all pleasures first and chief ;  
And live and die I will in thy belief ;  
For which I ask for guerdon but one boon,  
That Cresida again thou send me soon.

Constrain her heart as quickly to return,  
As thou dost mine with longing her to see,  
Then know I well that she would not sojourn.  
Now, blissful Lord, so cruel do not be  
Unto the blood of Troy, I pray of thee,  
As Juno was unto the Theban blood,  
From whence to Thebes came griefs in multitude.

And after this he to the gate did go,  
Whence Cresid rode, as if in haste she was ;  
And up and down there went, and to and fro,  
And to himself full oft he said, alas !  
From hence my hope and solace forth did pass.  
O would the blissful God now for his joy,  
I might her see again coming to Troy !

And up to yonder hill was I her guide ;  
Alas, and there I took of her my leave ;  
Yonder I saw her to her Father ride,  
For very grief of which my heart shall cleave :—  
And hither home I came when it was eve ;  
And here I dwell an outcast from all joy,  
And shall, unless I see her soon in Troy.

And of himself did he imagine oft,  
That he was blighted, pale, and waxen less  
Than he was wont ; and that in whispers soft  
Men said, what may it be, can no one guess  
Why Troilus hath all this heaviness ?  
All which he of himself conceited wholly  
Out of his weakness and his melancholy.



Another time he took into his head,  
That every wight, who in the way passed by,  
Had of him ruth, and fancied that they said,  
I am right sorry Troilus will die:  
And thus a day or two drove wearily,  
As ye have heard; such life 'gan he to lead  
As one that standeth betwixt hope and dread.

For which it pleased him in his songs to show  
The occasion of his woe, as best he might;  
And made a fitting song, of words but few,  
Somewhat his woeful heart to make more light;  
And when he was removed from all men's sight,  
With a soft night voice, he of his Lady dear,  
That absent was, 'gan sing as ye may hear.

O star, of which I lost have all the light,  
With a sore heart well ought I to bewail,  
That ever dark in torment, night by night,  
Toward my death with wind I steer and sail;  
For which upon the tenth night if thou fail  
With thy bright beams to guide me but one hour.  
My ship and me Charybdis will devour.

As soon as he this song had thus sung through,  
He fell again into his sorrows old;  
And every night, as was his wont to do,  
Troilus stood the bright moon to behold;  
And all his trouble to the moon he told,  
And said; I wis, when thou art horn'd anew,  
I shall be glad if all the world be true.

Thy horns were old as now upon that morrow,  
When hence did journey my bright Lady dear,  
That cause is of my torment and my sorrow;  
For which, oh, gentle Luna, bright and clear,  
For love of God, run fast above thy sphere;  
For when thy horns begin once more to spring,  
Then shall she come, that with her bliss may bring.

The day is more, and longer every night  
Than they were wont to be—for he thought so;  
And that the sun did take his course not right,  
By longer way than he was wont to go;  
And said, I am in constant dread I trow,  
That Phæton his son is yet alive,  
His too fond father's car amiss to drive.

Upon the walls fast also would he walk,  
 To the end that he the Grecian host might see ;  
 And ever thus he to himself would talk :—  
 Lo ! yonder is my own bright Lady free ;  
 Or yonder is it that the tents must be ;  
 And thence does come this air which is so sweet,  
 That in my soul I feel the joy of it.

And certainly this wind, that more and more  
 By moments thus increaseth in my face,  
 Is of my Lady's sighs heavy and sore ;  
 I prove it thus ; for in no other space  
 Of all this town, save only in this place,  
 Feel I a wind, that soundeth so like pain ;  
 It saith, Alas, why severed are we twain ?

A weary while in pain he tosseth thus,  
 Till fully past and gone was the ninth night ;  
 And ever at his side stood Pandarus,  
 Who busily made use of all his might  
 To comfort him, and make his heart more light ;  
 Giving him always hope, that she the morrow  
 Of the tenth day will come, and end his sorrow.

(1801)

## ODE

INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY FROM RECOLLECTIONS OF  
 EARLY CHILDHOOD<sup>1</sup>

## I

THERE WAS a time when meadow, grove, and stream,  
 The earth, and every common sight,  
     To me did seem  
     Apparelled in celestial light,  
 The glory and the freshness of a dream.  
 It is not now as it hath been of yore ;—  
     Turn wheresoe'er I may,  
     By night or day,  
 The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

<sup>1</sup> This was composed during my residence at Town-end, Grasmere.  
 Two years at least passed between the writing of the four first stanzas  
 and the remaining part.

## II

The Rainbow comes and goes,  
 And lovely is the Rose,  
 The Moon doth with delight  
 Look round her when the heavens are bare,  
 Waters on a starry night  
 Are beautiful and fair ;  
 The sunshine is a glorious birth ;  
 But yet I know, where'er I go,  
 That there hath past away a glory from the earth.

## III

Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous song,  
 And while the young lambs bound  
 As to the tabor's sound,  
 To me alone there came a thought of grief :  
 A timely utterance gave that thought relief,  
 And I again am strong :  
 The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep ;  
 No more shall grief of mine the season wrong ;  
 I hear the Echoes through the mountains throng,  
 The Winds come to me from the fields of sleep,  
 And all the earth is gay ;  
 Land and sea  
 Give themselves up to jollity,  
 And with the heart of May  
 Doth every Beast keep holiday ;—  
 Thou Child of Joy,  
 Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts, thou happy  
 Shepherd-boy !

## IV

Ye blessèd Creatures, I have heard the call  
 Ye to each other make ; I see  
 The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee ;  
 My heart is at your festival,  
 My head hath its coronal,  
 The fulness of your bliss, I feel—I feel it all.  
 Oh evil day ! if I were sullen  
 While Earth herself is adorning,  
 This sweet May-morning,  
 And the Children are culling  
 On every side,  
 In a thousand valleys far and wide,

Fresh flowers ; while the sun shines warm,  
And the Babe leaps up on his Mother's arm :—  
I hear, I hear, with joy I hear !  
—But there's a Tree, of many, one,  
A single Field which I have looked upon,  
Both of them speak of something that is gone :  
The Pansy at my feet  
Doth the same tale repeat :  
Whither is fled the visionary gleam ?  
Where is it now, the glory and the dream ?

## v

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting :  
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,  
Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
And cometh from afar :  
Not in entire forgetfulness,  
And not in utter nakedness,  
But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God, who is our home :  
Heaven lies about us in our infancy !  
Shades of the prison-house begin to close  
Upon the growing Boy,  
But He beholds the light, and whence it flows,  
He sees it in his joy ;  
The Youth, who daily farthest from the east  
Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,  
And by the vision splendid  
Is on his way attended ;  
At length the Man perceives it die away,  
And fade into the light of common day.

## vi

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own ;  
Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,  
And, even with something of a Mother's mind,  
And no unworthy aim,  
The homely Nurse doth all she can  
To make her Foster-child, her Inmate Man.  
Forget the glories he hath known,  
And that imperial palace whence he came.

## vii

Behold the Child among his new-born blisses,  
A six years' Darling of a pigmy size !

See, where 'mid work of his own hand he lies,  
 Fretted by sallies of his mother's kisses,  
 With light upon him from his father's eyes !  
 See, at his feet, some little plan or chart,  
 Some fragment from his dream of human life,  
 Shaped by himself with newly-learned art ;  
     A wedding or a festival,  
     A mourning or a funeral ;  
     And this hath now his heart,  
 And unto this he frames his song :  
     Then will he fit his tongue  
 To dialogues of business, love, or strife ;  
     But it will not be long  
     Ere this be thrown aside,  
     And with new joy and pride  
 The little Actor cons another part ;  
 Filling from time to time his "humorous stage"  
 With all the Persons, down to palsied Age,  
 That Life brings with her in her equipage ;  
     As if his whole vocation  
     Were endless imitation.

## VIII

Thou, whose exterior semblance doth belie  
 Thy Soul's immensity ;  
 Thou best Philosopher, who yet dost keep  
 Thy heritage, thou Eye among the blind,  
 That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep,  
 Haunted for ever by the eternal mind,—  
     Mighty Prophet ! Seer blest !  
     On whom those truths do rest,  
     Which we are toiling all our lives to find,  
     In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave ;  
 Thou, over whom thy Immortality  
 Broods like the Day, a Master o'er a Slave,  
 A Presence which is not to be put by ;  
 Thou little Child, yet glorious in the might  
 Of heaven-born freedom on thy being's height,  
 Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke  
 The years to bring the inevitable yoke,  
 Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife ?  
 Full soon thy Soul shall have her earthly freight,  
 And custom lie upon thee with a weight,  
 Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life !

## IX

O joy ! that in our embers  
Is something that doth live,  
That nature yet remembers  
What was so fugitive !

The thought of our past years in me doth breed  
Perpetual benediction : not indeed  
For that which is most worthy to be blest—  
Delight and liberty, the simple creed  
Of Childhood, whether busy or at rest,  
With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his breast :—

Not for these I raise

The song of thanks and praise ;

But for those obstinate questionings

Of sense and outward things,

Fallings from us, vanishings ;

Blank misgivings of a Creature

Moving about in worlds not realised,

High instincts before which our mortal Nature

Did tremble like a guilty Thing surprised :

But for those first affections,

Those shadowy recollections,

Which, be they what they may,

Are yet the fountain light of all our day,

Are yet a master light of all our seeing ;

Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make

Our noisy years seem moments in the being

Of the eternal Silence : truths that wake,

To perish never ;

Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour.

Nor Man nor Boy,

Nor all that is at enmity with joy,

Can utterly abolish or destroy !

Hence in a season of calm weather

Though inland far we be,

Our Souls have sight of that immortal sea

Which brought us hither,

Can in a moment travel thither,

And see the Children sport upon the shore,

And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

## X

Then sing, ye Birds, sing, sing a joyous song !

And let the young Lambs bound

As to the tabor's sound !

We in thought will join your throng,  
 Ye that pipe and ye that play,  
 Ye that through your hearts to-day  
 Feel the gladness of the May !  
 What though the radiance which was once so bright  
 Be now for ever taken from my sight,  
 Though nothing can bring back the hour  
 Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower ;  
 We will grieve not, rather find  
 Strength in what remains behind ;  
 In the primal sympathy  
 Which having been must ever be ;  
 In the soothing thoughts that spring  
 Out of human suffering ;  
 In the faith that looks through death,  
 In years that bring the philosophic mind.

## XI

And O, ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves,  
 Forebode not any severing of our loves !  
 Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might ;  
 I only have relinquished one delight  
 To live beneath your more habitual sway.  
 I love the Brooks which down their channels fret,  
 Even more than when I tripped lightly as they ;  
 The innocent brightness of a new-born Day  
 Is lovely yet ;  
 The Clouds that gather round the setting sun  
 Do take a sober colouring from an eye  
 That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality ;  
 Another race hath been, and other palms are won.  
 Thanks to the human heart by which we live,  
 Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,  
 To me the meanest flower that blows can give  
 Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

(1803-6)

VAUDRACOUR AND JULIA<sup>1</sup>

O HAPPY time of youthful lovers (thus  
 My story may begin), O balmy time,

<sup>1</sup> Written at Town-end, Grasmere. Faithfully narrated, though with the omission of many pathetic circumstances, from the mouth of a French lady, who had been an eye-and-ear-witness of all that was

In which a love-knot on a lady's brow  
Is fairer than the fairest star in heaven !  
To such inheritance of blessed fancy  
(Fancy that sports more desperately with minds  
Than ever fortune hath been known to do)  
The high-born Vaudracour was brought, by years  
Whose progress had a little overstepped  
His stripling prime. A town of small repute,  
Among the vine-clad mountains of Auvergne,  
Was the Youth's birth-place. There he wooed a Maid  
Who heard the heart-felt music of his suit  
With answering vows. Plebeian was the stock,  
Plebeian, though ingenuous, the stock,  
From which her graces and her honours sprung :  
And hence the father of the enamoured Youth,  
With haughty indignation, spurned the thought  
Of such alliance.—From their cradles up,  
With but a step between their several homes,  
Twins had they been in pleasure ; after strife  
And petty quarrels, had grown fond again ;  
Each other's advocate, each other's stay ;  
And, in their happiest moments, not content,  
If more divided than a sportive pair  
Of sea-fowl, conscious both that they are hovering  
Within the eddy of a common blast,  
Or hidden only by the concave depth  
Of neighbouring billows from each other's sight.

Thus, not without concurrence of an age  
Unknown to memory, was an earnest given  
By ready nature for a life of love,  
For endless constancy, and placid truth ;  
But whatsoever of such rare treasure lay  
Reserved, had fate permitted, for support  
Of their maturer years, his present mind  
Was under fascination ;—he beheld  
A vision, and adored the thing he saw.  
Arabian fiction never filled the world  
With half the wonders that were wrought for him.  
Earth breathed in one great presence of the spring ;  
Life turned the meanest of her implements,

done and said. Many long years after, I was told that Duplignè was then a monk in the Convent of La Trappe. The following tale was written as an Episode, in a work from which its length may perhaps exclude it. The facts are true ; no invention as to these has been exercised, as none was needed.

Before his eyes, to price above all gold ;  
The house she dwelt in was a sainted shrine ;  
Her chamber-window did surpass in glory  
The portals of the dawn ; all paradise  
Could, by the simple opening of a door,  
Let itself in upon him :—pathways, walks,  
Swarmed with enchantment, till his spirit sank,  
Surcharged, within him, overblest to move  
Beneath a sun that wakes a weary world  
To its dull round of ordinary cares ;  
A man too happy for mortality !

So passed the time, till whether through effect  
Of some unguarded moment that dissolved  
Virtuous restraint—ah, speak it, think it, not !  
Deem rather that the fervent Youth, who saw  
So many bars between his present state  
And the dear haven where he wished to be  
In honourable wedlock with his Love,  
Was in his judgment tempted to decline  
To perilous weakness, and entrust his cause  
To nature for a happy end of all ;  
Deem that by such fond hope the Youth was swayed,  
And bear with their transgression, when I add  
That Julia, wanting yet the name of wife,  
Carried about her for a secret grief  
The promise of a mother.

To conceal  
The threatened shame, the parents of the Maid  
Found means to hurry her away by night,  
And unforwarned, that in some distant spot  
She might remain shrouded in privacy,  
Until the babe was born. When morning came  
The Lover, thus bereft, stung with his loss,  
And all uncertain whither he should turn,  
Chafed like a wild beast in the toils ; but soon  
Discovering traces of the fugitives,  
Their steps he followed to the Maid's retreat.  
Easily may the sequel be divined—  
Walks to and fro—watchings at every hour ;  
And the fair Captive, who, whene'er she may,  
Is busy at her casement as the swallow  
Fluttering its pinions, almost within reach,  
About the pendent nest, did thus espy  
Her Lover !—thence a stolen interview,  
Accomplished under friendly shade of night.

I pass the raptures of the pair ;—such theme  
Is, by innumerable poets, touched  
In more delightful verse than skill of mine  
Could fashion ; chiefly by that darling bard  
Who told of Juliet and her Romeo,  
And of the lark's note heard before its time,  
And of the streaks that laced the severing clouds  
In the unrelenting east.—Through all her courts  
The vacant city slept ; the busy winds,  
That keep no certain intervals of rest,  
Moved not ; meanwhile the galaxy displayed  
Her fires, that like mysterious pulses beat  
Aloft ;—momentous but uneasy bliss !  
To their full hearts the universe seemed hung  
On that brief meeting's slender filament !

They parted ; and the generous Vaudracour  
Reached speedily the native threshold, bent  
On making (so the Lovers had agreed)  
A sacrifice of birthright to attain  
A final portion from his father's hand ;  
Which granted, Bride and Bridegroom then would flee  
To some remote and solitary place,  
Shady as night, and beautiful as heaven,  
Where they may live, with no one to behold  
Their happiness, or to disturb their love.  
But *now* of this no whisper ; not the less,  
If ever an obtrusive word were dropped  
Touching the matter of his passion, still,  
In his stern father's hearing, Vaudracour  
Persisted openly that death alone  
Should abrogate his human privilege  
Divine, of swearing everlasting truth,  
Upon the altar, to the Maid he loved.

“You shall be baffled in your mad intent  
If there be justice in the court of France,”  
Muttered the Father.—From these words the Youth  
Conceived a terror ; and, by night or day,  
Stirred nowhere without weapons, that full soon  
Found dreadful provocation : for at night  
When to his chamber he retired, attempt  
Was made to seize him by three armed men,  
Acting, in furtherance of the father's will,  
Under a private signet of the State.  
One the rash Youth's ungovernable hand  
Slew, and as quickly to a second gave

A perilous wound—he shuddered to behold  
The breathless corse ; then peacefully resigned  
His person to the law, was lodged in prison,  
And wore the fetters of a criminal.

Have you observed a tuft of wingèd seed  
That, from the dandelion's naked stalk,  
Mounted aloft, is suffered not to use  
Its natural gifts for purposes of rest,  
Driven by the autumnal whirlwind to and fro  
Through the wide element ? or have you marked  
The heavier substance of a leaf-clad bough,  
Within the vortex of a foaming flood,  
Tormented ? by such aid you may conceive  
The perturbation that ensued ;—ah, no !  
Desperate the Maid—the Youth is stained with blood ;  
Unmatchable on earth is their disquiet !  
Yet as the troubled seed and tortured bough  
Is Man, subjected to despotic sway.

For him, by private influence with the Court,  
Was pardon gained, and liberty procured ;  
But not without exaction of a pledge,  
Which liberty and love dispersed in air.  
He flew to her from whom they would divide him—  
He clove to her who could not give him peace—  
Yea, his first word of greeting was,—“ All right  
Is gone from me ; my lately-towering hopes,  
To the least fibre of their lowest root,  
Are withered ; thou no longer canst be mine,  
I thine—the conscience-stricken must not woo  
The unruffled Innocent,—I see thy face,  
Behold thee, and my misery is complete ! ”

“ One, are we not ? ” exclaimed the Maiden—“ One,  
For innocence and youth, for weal and woe ? ”  
Then with the father's name she coupled words  
Of vehement indignation ; but the Youth  
Checked her with filial meekness ; for no thought  
Uncharitable crossed his mind, no sense  
Of hasty anger rising in the eclipse  
Of true domestic loyalty, did e'er  
Find place within his bosom.—Once again  
The persevering wedge of tyranny  
Achieved their separation : and once more  
Were they united,—to be yet again  
Disparted, pitiable lot ! But here  
A portion of the tale may well be left

In silence, though my memory could add  
Much how the Youth, in scanty space of time,  
Was traversed from without ; much, too, of thoughts  
That occupied his days in solitude  
Under privation and restraint ; and what,  
Through dark and shapeless fear of things to come,  
And what, through strong compunction for the past,  
He suffered—breaking down in heart and mind !

Doomed to a third and last captivity,  
His freedom he recovered on the eve  
Of Julia's travail. When the babe was born,  
Its presence tempted him to cherish schemes  
Of future happiness. " You shall return,  
Julia," said he, "and to your father's house  
Go with the child.—You have been wretched ; yet  
The silver shower, whose reckless burthen weighs  
Too heavily upon the lily's head,  
Oft leaves a saving moisture at its root.  
Malice, beholding you, will melt away.  
Go !—'tis a town where both of us were born ;  
None will reproach you, for our truth is known ;  
And if, amid those once-bright bowers, our fate  
Remain unpitied, pity is not in man.  
With ornaments—the prettiest, nature yields  
Or art can fashion, shall you deck our boy,  
And feed his countenance with your own sweet looks  
Till no one can resist him.—Now, even now,  
I see him sporting on the sunny lawn ;  
My father from the window sees him too ;  
Startled, as if some new-created thing  
Enriched the earth, or Faery of the woods  
Bounded before him ;—but the unweeting Child  
Shall by his beauty win his grandsire's heart  
So that it shall be softened, and our loves  
End happily, as they began ! "

These gleams  
Appeared but seldom ; oftener was he seen  
Propping a pale and melancholy face  
Upon the Mother's bosom ; resting thus  
His head upon one breast, while from the other  
The Babe was drawing in its quiet food.  
—That pillow is no longer to be thine,  
Fond Youth ! that mournful solace now must pass  
Into the list of things that cannot be !  
Unwedded Julia, terror-smitten, hears

The sentence, by her mother's lip pronounced,  
 That dooms her to a convent.—Who shall tell,  
 Who dares report, the tidings to the lord  
 Of her affections? so they blindly asked  
 Who knew not to what quiet depths a weight  
 Of agony had pressed the Sufferer down:  
 The word, by others dreaded, he can hear  
 Composed and silent, without visible sign  
 Of even the least emotion. Noting this,  
 When the impatient object of his love  
 Upbraided him with slackness, he returned  
 No answer, only took the mother's hand  
 And kissed it; seemingly devoid of pain,  
 Or care, that what so tenderly he pressed,  
 Was a dependant on the obdurate heart  
 Of one who came to disunite their lives  
 For ever—sad alternative! preferred,  
 By the unbending Parents of the Maid,  
 To secret 'spousals meanly disavowed.  
 —So be it!

In the city he remained  
 A season after Julia had withdrawn  
 To those religious walls. He, too, departs—  
 Who with him?—even the senseless Little-one.  
 With that sole charge he passed the city-gates,  
 For the last time, attendant by the side  
 Of a close chair, a litter, or sedan,  
 In which the Babe was carried. To a hill,  
 That rose a brief league distant from the town,  
 The dwellers in that house where he had lodged  
 Accompanied his steps, by anxious love  
 Impelled;—they parted from him there, and stood  
 Watching below till he had disappeared  
 On the hill top. His eyes he scarcely took,  
 Throughout that journey, from the vehicle  
 (Slow-moving ark of all his hopes!) that veiled  
 The tender infant: and, at every inn,  
 And under every hospitable tree  
 At which the bearers halted or reposed,  
 Laid him with timid care upon his knees,  
 And looked, as mothers ne'er were known to look,  
 Upon the nursling which his arms embraced.

This was the manner in which Vaudracour  
 Departed with his infant; and thus reached  
 His father's house, where to the innocent child

Admittance was denied. The young man spake  
No word of indignation or reproof,  
But of his father begged, a last request,  
That a retreat might be assigned to him  
Where in forgotten quiet he might dwell,  
With such allowance as his wants required ;  
For wishes he had none. To a lodge that stood  
Deep in a forest, with leave given, at the age  
Of four-and-twenty summers, he withdrew ;  
And thither took with him his motherless Babe,  
And one domestic for their common needs,  
An aged woman. It consoled him here  
To attend upon the orphan, and perform  
Obsequious service to the precious child,  
Which, after a short time, by some mistake  
Or indiscretion of the Father, died.—  
The Tale I follow to its last recess  
Of suffering or of peace, I know not which :  
Theirs be the blame who caused the woe, not mine !

From this time forth he never shared a smile  
With mortal creature. An Inhabitant  
Of that same town, in which the pair had left  
So lively a remembrance of their griefs,  
By chance of business, coming within reach  
Of his retirement, to the forest lodge  
Repaired, but only found the matron there,  
Who told him that his pains were thrown away,  
For that her Master never uttered word  
To living thing—not even to her.—Behold !  
While they were speaking, Vaudracour approached ;  
But, seeing some one near, as on the latch  
Of the garden-gate his hand was laid, he shrunk—  
And, like a shadow, glided out of view.  
Shocked at his savage aspect, from the place  
The visitor retired.

Thus lived the Youth  
Cut off from all intelligence with man,  
And shunning even the light of common day ;  
Nor could the voice of Freedom, which through France  
Full speedily resounded, public hope,  
Or personal memory of his own deep wrongs,  
Rouse him : but in those solitary shades  
His days he wasted, an imbecile mind !

THE TRIAD<sup>1</sup>

Show me the noblest Youth of present time,  
 Whose trembling fancy would to love give birth :  
 Some God or Hero, from the Olympian clime  
 Returned, to seek a Consort upon earth ;  
 Or, in no doubtful prospect, let me see  
 The brightest star of ages yet to be,  
 And I will mate and match him blissfully  
 I will not fetch a Naiad from a flood  
 Pure as herself—(song lacks not mightier power)  
 Nor leaf-crowned Dryad from a pathless wood,  
 Nor Sea-nymph glistening from her coral bower ;  
 Mere Mortals bodied forth in vision still,  
 Shall with Mount Ida's triple lustre fill  
 The chaster coverts of a British hill.

"Appear !—obey my lyre's command !  
 Come, like the Graces, hand in hand !  
 For ye, though not by birth allied,  
 Are Sisters in the bond of love ;  
 Nor shall the tongue of envious pride  
 Presume those interweavings to reprove  
 In you, which that fair progeny of Jove,  
 Learned from the tuneful spheres that glide  
 In endless union, earth and sea above."

—I sing in vain ;—the pines have hushed their waving :  
 A peerless Youth expectant at my side,  
 Breathless as they, with unabated craving  
 Looks to the earth, and to the vacant air ;  
 And, with a wandering eye that seems to chide,  
 Asks of the clouds what occupants they hide :—  
 But why solicit more than sight could bear,  
 By casting on a moment all we dare ?  
 Invoke we those bright Beings one by one ;  
 And what was boldly promised, truly shall be done.

"Fear not a constraining measure !  
 —Yielding to this gentle spell,  
 Lucida ! from domes of pleasure,  
 Or from cottage-sprinkled dell,  
 Come to regions solitary,  
 Where the eagle builds her æry,  
 Above the hermit's long-forsaken cell !"

<sup>1</sup> Written at Rydal Mount. The Girls, Edith Southey, my daughter Dora, and Sara Coleridge.

—She comes!—behold  
That Figure, like a ship with snow-white sail!  
Nearer she draws; a breeze uplifts her veil;  
Upon her coming wait  
As pure a sunshine and as soft a gale  
As e'er, on herbage covering earthly mould,  
Tempted the bird of Juno to unfold  
His richest splendour—when his veering gait  
And every motion of his starry train  
Seem governed by a strain  
Of music, audible to him alone.

“O Lady, worthy of earth's proudest throne!  
Nor less, by excellence of nature, fit  
Beside an unambitious hearth to sit  
Domestic queen, where grandeur is unknown;  
What living man could fear  
The worst of Fortune's malice, wert Thou near,  
Humbling that lily-stem, thy sceptre meek,  
That its fair flowers may from his cheek  
Brush the too happy tear?”

——Queen, and handmaid lowly!  
Whose skill can speed the day with lively cares,  
And banish melancholy  
By all that mind invents or hand prepares;  
O Thou, against whose lip, without its smile  
And in its silence even, no heart is proof;  
Whose goodness, sinking deep, would reconcile  
The softest Nursling of a gorgeous palace  
To the bare life beneath the hawthorn-roof  
Of Sherwood's Archer, or in caves of Wallace—  
Who that hath seen thy beauty could content  
His soul with but a *glimpse* of heavenly day?  
Who that hath loved thee, but would lay  
His strong hand on the wind, if it were bent  
To take thee in thy majesty away?  
Pass onward (even the glancing deer  
Till we depart intrude not here;)  
That mossy slope, o'er which the woodbine throws  
A canopy, is smoothed for thy repose!”

—Glad moment is it when the throng  
Of warblers in full concert strong  
Strive, and not vainly strive, to rout  
The lagging shower, and force coy Phœbus out,  
Met by the rainbow's form divine,  
Issuing from her cloudy shrine;—

So may the thrillings of the lyre  
Prevail to further our desire,  
While to these shades a sister Nymph I call.  
"Come, if the notes thine ear may pierce,  
Come, youngest of the lovely Three,  
Submissive to the might of verse  
And the dear voice of harmony,  
By none more deeply felt than Thee!"  
—I sang; and lo! from pastimes virginal  
She hastens to the tents  
Of nature, and the lonely elements.  
Air sparkles round her with a dazzling sheen;  
But mark her glowing cheek, her vesture green!  
And, as if wishful to disarm  
Or to repay the potent Charm,  
She bears the stringèd lute of old romance,  
That cheered the trellised arbour's privacy,  
And soothed war-wearied knights in rafters hall.  
How vivid, yet how delicate, her glee!  
So tripped the Muse, inventress of the dance;  
So, truant in waste woods, the blithe Euphrosyne!  
But the ringlets of that head  
Why are they ungarlanded?  
Why bedeck her temples less  
Than the simplest shepherdess?  
Is it not a brow inviting  
Choicest flowers that ever breathed,  
Which the myrtle would delight in  
With Idalian rose entwreathed?  
But her humility is well content  
With *one* wild floweret (call it not forlorn),  
FLOWER OF THE WINDS, beneath her bosom worn—  
Yet more for love than ornament.  
Open, ye thickets! let her fly,  
Swift as a Thracian Nymph o'er field and height!  
For She, to all but those who love her, shy,  
Would gladly vanish from a Stranger's sight;  
Though where she is beloved and loves,  
Light as the wheeling butterfly she moves;  
Her happy spirit as a bird is free,  
That rifles blossoms on a tree,  
Turning them inside out with arch audacity.  
Alas! how little can a moment show  
Of an eye where feeling plays  
In ten thousand dewy rays;

A face o'er which a thousand shadows go !  
—She stops—is fastened to that rivulet's side ;  
And there (while, with sedater mien,  
O'er timid waters that have scarcely left  
Their birthplace in the rocky cleft  
She bends) at leisure may be seen  
Features to old ideal grace allied,  
Amid their smiles and dimples dignified—  
Fit countenance for the soul of primal truth ;  
The bland composure of eternal youth !  
What more changeful than the sea ?  
But over his great tides  
Fidelity presides ;  
And this light-hearted Maiden constant is as he.  
High is her aim as heaven above,  
And wide as ether her good-will ;  
And, like the lowly reed, her love  
Can drink its nurture from the scantiest rill :  
Insight as keen as frosty star  
Is to *her* charity no bar,  
Nor interrupts her frolic graces  
When she is, far from these wild places,  
Encircled by familiar faces.  
O the charm that manners draw,  
Nature, from thy genuine law !  
If from what her hand would do,  
Her voice would utter, aught ensue  
Untoward or unfit ;  
She, in benign affections pure,  
In self-forgetfulness secure,  
Sheds round the transient harm or vague mischance  
A light unknown to tutored elegance :  
Her's is not a cheek shame-stricken,  
But her blushes are joy-flushes ;  
And the fault (if fault it be)  
Only ministers to quicken  
Laughter-loving gaiety,  
And kindle sportive wit—  
Leaving this Daughter of the mountains free  
As if she knew that Oberon king of Faery  
Had crossed her purpose with some quaint vagary,  
And heard his viewless bands  
Over their mirthful triumph clapping hands.  
" Last of the Three, though eldest born,  
Reveal thyself, like pensive Morn

Touched by the skylark's earliest note,  
Ere humbler gladness be afloat.  
But whether in the semblance drest  
Of Dawn—or Eve, fair vision of the west,  
Come with each anxious hope subdued  
By woman's gentle fortitude,  
Each grief, through meekness, settling into rest.  
—Or I would hail thee when some high-wrought page  
Of a closed volume lingering in thy hand  
Has raised thy spirit to a peaceful stand  
Among the glories of a happier age."  
Her brow hath opened on me—see it there,  
Brightening the umbrage of her hair ;  
So gleams the crescent moon, that loves  
To be descried through shady groves.  
Tenderest bloom is on her cheek ;  
Wish not for a richer streak ;  
Nor dread the depth of meditative eye ;  
But let thy love, upon that azure field  
Of thoughtfulness and beauty, yield  
Its homage offered up in purity.  
What would'st thou more? In sunny glade,  
Or under leaves of thickest shade,  
Was such a stillness e'er diffused  
Since earth grew calm while angels mused ?  
Softly she treads, as if her foot were loth  
To crush the mountain dew-drops—soon to melt  
On the flower's breast ; as if she felt  
That flowers themselves, whate'er their hue,  
With all their fragrance, all their glistening,  
Call to the heart for inward listening—  
And though for bridal wreaths and tokens true  
Welcomed wisely ; though a growth  
Which the careless shepherd sleeps on,  
As fitly spring from turf the mourner weeps on—  
And without wrong are cropped the marble tomb to strew.  
The Charm is over ; the mute Phantoms gone,  
Nor will return—but droop not, favoured Youth ;  
The apparition that before thee shone  
Obeyed a summons covetous of truth.  
From these wild rocks thy footsteps I will guide  
To bowers in which thy fortune may be tried,  
And one of the bright Three become thy happy Bride.

THE EGYPTIAN MAID<sup>1</sup>

OR,

THE ROMANCE OF THE WATER LILY

WHILE Merlin paced the Cornish sands,  
Forth-looking toward the rocks of Scilly,  
The pleased Enchanter was aware  
Of a bright Ship that seemed to hang in air,  
Yet was she work of mortal hands,  
And took from men her name—THE WATER LILY.

Soft was the wind, that landward blew ;  
And, as the Moon, o'er some dark hill ascendant,  
Grows from a little edge of light  
To a full orb, this Pinnacle bright  
Became, as nearer to the coast she drew,  
More glorious, with spread sail and streaming pendant.

Upon this winged Shape so fair  
Sage Merlin gazed with admiration :  
Her lineaments, thought he, surpass  
Aught that was ever shown in magic glass ;  
Was ever built with patient care ;  
Or, at a touch, produced by happiest transformation.

Now, though a Mechanist, whose skill  
Shames the degenerate grasp of modern science,  
Grave Merlin (and belike the more  
For practising occult and perilous lore)  
Was subject to a freakish will  
That sapped good thoughts, or scared them with defiance.

Provoked to envious spleen, he cast  
An altered look upon the advancing Stranger  
Whom he had hailed with joy, and cried,  
" My Art shall help to tame her pride—"  
Anon the breeze became a blast,  
And the waves rose, and sky portended danger.

<sup>1</sup> For the names and persons in the following poem, see the "History of the renowned Prince Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table;" for the rest the Author is answerable; only it may be proper to add, that the Lotus, with the bust of the Goddess appearing to rise out of the full-blown flower, was suggested by the beautiful work of ancient art, once included among the Townley Marbles, and now in the British Museum.

With thrilling word, and potent sign  
Traced on the beach, his work the Sorcerer urges ;  
The clouds in blacker clouds are lost,  
Like spiteful Fiends that vanish, crossed  
By Fiends of aspect more malign ;  
And the winds roused the Deep with fiercer scourges.

But worthy of the name she bore  
Was this Sea-flower, this buoyant Galley ;  
Supreme in loveliness and grace  
Of motion, whether in the embrace  
Of trusty anchorage, or scudding o'er  
The main flood roughened into hill and valley.

Behold, how wantonly she laves  
Her sides, the Wizard's craft confounding ;  
Like something out of Ocean sprung  
To be for ever fresh and young,  
Breasts the sea-flashes, and huge waves  
Top-gallant high, rebounding and rebounding !

But Ocean under magic heaves,  
And cannot spare the Thing he cherished :  
Ah ! what avails that she was fair,  
Luminous, blithe, and debonair ?  
The storm has stripped her of her leaves ;  
The Lily floats no longer !—She hath perished.

Grieve for her,—she deserves no less ;  
So like, yet so unlike, a living Creature !  
No heart had she, no busy brain ;  
Though loved, she could not love again ;  
Though pitied, *feel* her own distress ;  
Nor aught that troubles us, the fools of Nature.

Yet is there cause for gushing tears ;  
So richly was this Galley laden,  
A fairer than herself she bore,  
And, in her struggles, cast ashore ;  
A lovely One, who nothing hears  
Of wind or wave—a meek and guileless Maiden.

Into a cave had Merlin fled  
From mischief, caused by spells himself had muttered ;  
And while, repentant all too late,  
In moody posture there he sate,  
He heard a voice, and saw, with half-raised head,  
A Visitant by whom these words were uttered ;

"On Christian service this frail Bark  
Sailed " (hear me, Merlin ! ) " under high protection,  
Though on her prow a sign of heathen power  
Was carved—a Goddess with a Lily flower,  
The old Egyptian's emblematic mark  
Of joy immortal and of pure affection.

Her course was for the British strand ;  
Her freight, it was a Damsel peerless ;  
God reigns above, and Spirits strong  
May gather to avenge this wrong  
Done to the Princess, and her Land  
Which she in duty left, sad but not cheerless.

And to Caerleon's loftiest tower  
Soon will the Knights of Arthur's Table  
A cry of lamentation send ;  
And all will weep who there attend,  
To grace that Stranger's bridal hour,  
For whom the sea was made unnavigable.

Shame ! should a Child of royal line  
Die through the blindness of thy malice ? "  
Thus to the Necromancer spake  
Nina, the Lady of the Lake,  
A gentle Sorceress, and benign,  
Who ne'er embittered any good man's chalice.

"What boots," continued she, "to mourn ?  
To expiate thy sin endeavour :  
From the bleak isle where she is laid,  
Fetched by our art, the Egyptian Maid  
May yet to Arthur's court be borne  
Cold as she is, ere life be fled for ever.

My pearly Boat, a shining Light,  
That brought me down that sunless river,  
Will bear me on from wave to wave,  
And back with her to this sea-cave ;—  
Then, Merlin ! for a rapid flight  
Through air, to thee my Charge will I deliver.

The very swiftest of thy cars  
Must, when my part is done, be ready ;  
Meanwhile, for further guidance, look  
Into thy own prophetic book ;  
And, if that fail, consult the Stars  
To learn thy course ; farewell ! be prompt and steady."

This scarcely spoken, she again  
Was seated in her gleaming shallop,  
That, o'er the yet-distempered Deep,  
Pursued its way with bird-like sweep,  
Or like a steed, without a rein,  
Urged o'er the wilderness in sportive gallop.

Soon did the gentle Nina reach  
That Isle without a house or haven ;  
Landing, she found not what she sought,  
Nor saw of wreck or ruin aught  
But a carved Lotus cast upon the beach  
By the fierce waves, a flower in marble graven.

Sad relique, but how fair the while !  
For gently each from each retreating  
With backward curve, the leaves revealed  
The bosom half, and half concealed,  
Of a Divinity, that seemed to smile  
On Nina, as she passed, with hopeful greeting.

No quest was hers of vague desire,  
Of tortured hope and purpose shaken ;  
Following the margin of a bay,  
She spied the lonely Castaway,  
Unmarred, unstripped of her attire,  
But with closed eyes,—of breath and bloom forsaken.

Then Nina, stooping down, embraced,  
With tenderness and mild emotion,  
The Damsel, in that trance embound ;  
And, while she raised her from the ground,  
And in the pearly shallop placed,  
Sleep fell upon the air, and stilled the ocean.

The turmoil hushed, celestial springs  
Of music opened, and there came a blending  
Of fragrance, underived from earth,  
With gleams that owed not to the sun their birth,  
And that soft rustling of invisible wings  
Which Angels make, on works of love descending.

And Nina heard a sweeter voice  
Than if the Goddess of the flower had spoken :  
"Thou hast achieved, fair Dame ! what none  
Less pure in spirit could have done ;  
Go, in thy enterprise rejoice !  
Air, earth, sea, sky, and heaven, success betoken."

So cheered, she left that Island bleak,  
A bare rock of the Scilly cluster ;  
And, as they traversed the smooth brine,  
The self-illumin'd Brigantine  
Shed, on the Slumberer's cold wan cheek  
And pallid brow, a melancholy lustre.

Fleet was their course, and when they came  
To the dim cavern, whence the river  
Issued into the salt-sea flood,  
Merlin, as fixed in thought he stood,  
Was thus accosted by the Dame ;

" Behold to thee my Charge I now deliver !

But where attends thy chariot—where ?"—  
Quoth Merlin, " Even as I was bidden,  
So have I done ; as trusty as thy barge  
My vehicle shall prove—O precious Charge !  
If this be sleep, how soft ! if death, how fair !  
Much have my books disclosed, but the end is hidden."

He spake ; and gliding into view  
Forth from the grotto's dimmest chamber  
Came two mute Swans, whose plumes of dusky white  
Changed, as the pair approached the light,  
Drawing an ebon car, their hue  
(Like clouds of sunset) into lucid amber.

Once more did gentle Nina lift  
The Princess, passive to all changes :  
The car received her :—then up-went  
Into the ethereal element  
The Birds with progress smooth and swift  
As thought, when through bright regions memory ranges.

Sage Merlin, at the Slumberer's side,  
Instructs the Swans their way to measure ;  
And soon Caerleon's towers appeared,  
And notes of minstrelsy were heard  
From rich pavilions spreading wide,  
For some high day of long-expected pleasure.

Awe-stricken stood both Knights and Dames  
Ere on firm ground the car alighted ;  
Eftsoons astonishment was past,  
For in that face they saw the last  
Last lingering look of clay, that tames  
All pride ; by which all happiness is blighted.

Said Merlin, "Mighty King, fair Lords,  
 Away with feast and tilt and tourney !  
 Ye saw, throughout this royal House,  
 Ye heard, a rocking marvellous  
 Of turrets, and a clash of swords  
 Self-shaken, as I closed my airy journey.

Lo ! by a destiny well known  
 To mortals, joy is turned to sorrow ;  
 This is the wished-for Bride, the Maid  
 Of Egypt, from a rock conveyed  
 Where she by shipwreck had been thrown,  
 Ill sight ! but grief may vanish ere the morrow."

"Though vast thy power, thy words are weak,"  
 Exclaimed the King, "a mockery hateful ;  
 Dutiful Child, her lot how hard !  
 Is this her piety's reward ?  
 Those watery locks, that bloodless cheek !  
 O winds without remorse ! O shore ungrateful !

Rich robes are fretted by the moth ;  
 Towers, temples, fall by stroke of thunder ;  
 Will that, or deeper thoughts, abate  
 A Father's sorrow for her fate ?  
 He will repent him of his troth ;  
 His brain will burn, his stout heart split asunder.

Alas ! and I have caused this woe ;  
 For, when my prowess from invading Neighbours  
 Had freed his Realm, he plighted word  
 That he would turn to Christ our Lord,  
 And his dear Daughter on a Knight bestow  
 Whom I should choose for love and matchless labours.

Her birth was heathen ; but a fence  
 Of holy Angels round her hovered :  
 A Lady added to my court  
 So fair, of such divine report  
 And worship, seemed a recompence  
 For fifty kingdoms by my sword recovered.

Ask not for whom, O Champions true !  
 She was reserved by me her life's betrayer ;  
 She who was meant to be a bride  
 Is now a corse : then put aside  
 Vain thoughts, and speed ye, with observance due  
 Of Christian rites, in Christian ground to lay her."

"The tomb," said Merlin, "may not close  
Upon her yet, earth hide her beauty ;  
Not froward to thy sovereign will  
Esteem me, Liege ! if I, whose skill  
Wafted her hither, interpose  
To check this pious haste of erring duty.

My books command me to lay bare  
The secret thou art bent on keeping :  
Here must a high attest be given,  
*What* Bridegroom was for her ordained by Heaven.  
And in my glass significant there are  
Of things that may to gladness turn this weeping.

For this, approaching, One by One,  
Thy Knights must touch the cold hand of the Virgin ;  
So, for the favoured One, the Flower may bloom  
Once more : but, if unchangeable her doom,  
If life departed be for ever gone,  
Some blest assurance, from this cloud emerging,

May teach him to bewail his loss ;  
Not with a grief that, like a vapour, rises  
And melts ; but grief devout that shall endure,  
And a perpetual growth secure  
Of purposes which no false thought shall cross,  
A harvest of high hopes and noble enterprises."

"So be it," said the King ;—"anon,  
Here, where the Princess lies, begin the trial ;  
Knights each in order as ye stand  
Step forth."—To touch the pallid hand  
Sir Agravaine advanced ; no sign he won  
From Heaven or earth ;—Sir Kaye had like denial.

Abashed, Sir Dinas turned away ;  
Even for Sir Percival was no disclosure ;  
Though he, devoutest of all Champions, ere  
He reached that ebon car, the bier  
Whereon diffused like snow the Damsel lay,  
Full thrice had crossed himself in meek composure.

Imagine (but ye Saints ! who can ?)  
How in still air the balance trembled—  
The wishes, peradventure the despites  
That overcame some not ungenerous Knights ;  
And all the thoughts that lengthened out a span  
Of time to Lords and Ladies thus assembled.



What patient confidence was here !  
And there how many bosoms panted !  
While drawing toward the car Sir Gawaine, mailed  
For tournament, his beaver veiled,  
And softly touched ; but, to his princely cheer  
And high expectancy, no sign was granted.

Next, disencumbered of his harp,  
Sir Tristram, dear to thousands as a brother,  
Came to the proof, nor grieved that there ensued  
No change ;—the fair Izonda he had wooed  
With love too true, a love with pangs too sharp,  
From hope too distant, not to dread another.

Not so Sir Launcelot ;—from Heaven's grace  
A sign he craved, tired slave of vain contrition ;  
The royal Guinever looked passing glad  
When his touch failed.—Next came Sir Galahad ;  
He paused, and stood entranced by that still face  
Whose features he had seen in noontide vision.

For late, as near a murmuring stream  
He rested 'mid an arbour green and shady,  
Nina, the good Enchantress, shed  
A light around his mossy bed ;  
And, at her call, a waking dream  
Prefigured to his sense the Egyptian Lady.

Now, while his bright-haired front he bowed,  
And stood, far-kenned by mantle furred with ermine,  
As o'er the insensate Body hung  
The enrapt, the beautiful, the young,  
Belief sank deep into the crowd  
That he the solemn issue would determine.

Nor deem it strange ; the Youth had worn  
That very mantle on a day of glory,  
The day when he achieved that matchless feat,  
The marvel of the PERILOUS SEAT,  
Which whosoe'er approached of strength was shorn,  
Though King or Knight the most renowned in story.

He touched with hesitating hand—  
And lo ! those Birds, far-famed through Love's  
dominions,

The Swans, in triumph clap their wings;  
And their necks play, involved in rings,  
Like sinless snakes in Eden's happy land;—  
"Mine is she," cried the Knight;—again they clapped  
their pinions.

"Mine was she—mine she is, though dead,  
And to her name my soul shall cleave in sorrow;"  
Whereat, a tender twilight streak  
Of colour dawned upon the Damsel's cheek;  
And her lips, quickening with uncertain red,  
Seemed from each other a faint warmth to borrow.

Deep was the awe, the rapture high,  
Of love emboldened, hope with dread entwining,  
When, to the mouth, relenting Death  
Allowed a soft and flower-like breath,  
Precursor to a timid sigh,  
To lifted eyelids, and a doubtful shining.

In silence did King Arthur gaze  
Upon the signs that pass away or tarry;  
In silence watched the gentle strife  
Of Nature leading back to life;  
Then eased his soul at length by praise  
Of God, and Heaven's pure Queen—the blissful Mary.

Then said he, "Take her to thy heart,  
Sir Galahad! a treasure, that God giveth,  
Bound by indissoluble ties to thee  
Through mortal change and immortality;  
Be happy and unenvied, thou who art  
A goodly Knight that hath no peer that liveth!"

Not long the Nuptials were delayed;  
And sage tradition still rehearses  
The pomp, the glory of that hour  
When toward the altar from her bower  
King Arthur led the Egyptian Maid,  
And Angels carolled these far-echoed verses;—

Who shrinks not from alliance  
Of evil with good Powers,  
To God proclaims defiance,  
And mocks whom he adores.

A Ship to Christ devoted  
From the Land of Nile did go;  
Alas! the bright Ship floated,  
An Idol at her prow.

By magic domination,  
The Heaven-permitted vent  
Of purblind mortal passion,  
Was wrought her punishment.

The Flower the Form within it,  
What served they in her need?  
Her port she could not win it,  
Nor from mishap be freed.

The tempest overcame her,  
And she was seen no more;  
But gently, gently blame her—  
She cast a Pearl ashore.

The Maid to Jesu hearkened,  
And kept to him her faith,  
Till sense in death was darkened,  
Or sleep akin to death.

But Angels round her pillow  
Kept watch, a viewless band;  
And, billow favouring billow,  
She reached the destined strand.

Blest Pair! whate'er befall you,  
Your faith in Him approve  
Who from frail earth can call you  
To bowers of endless love!

(1830)

## THE RUSSIAN FUGITIVE

### PART I

ENOUGH of rose-bud lips, and eyes  
Like harebells bathed in dew,  
Of cheek that with carnation vies,  
And veins of violet hue;  
Earth wants not beauty that may scorn  
A likening to frail flowers;  
Yea, to the stars, if they were born  
For seasons and for hours.

Through Moscow's gates, with gold unbarred,  
Stepped One at dead of night,  
Whom such high beauty could not guard  
From meditated blight;

By stealth she passed, and fled as fast  
As doth the hunted fawn,  
Nor stopped, till in the dappling east  
Appeared unwelcome dawn.

Seven days she lurked in brake and field,  
Seven nights her course renewed,  
Sustained by what her scrip might yield,  
Or berries of the wood ;  
At length, in darkness travelling on,  
When lowly doors were shut,  
The haven of her hope she won,  
Her Foster-mother's hut.

"To put your love to dangerous proof  
I come," said she, "from far ;  
For I have left my Father's roof,  
In terror of the Czar."  
No answer did the Matron give,  
No second look she cast,  
But hung upon the Fugitive,  
Embracing and embraced.

She led the Lady to a seat  
Beside the glimmering fire,  
Bathed duteously her wayworn feet,  
Prevented each desire :—  
The cricket chirped, the house-dog dozed,  
And on that simple bed,  
Where she in childhood had reposed,  
Now rests her weary head.

When she, whose couch had been the sod,  
Whose curtain, pine or thorn,  
Had breathed a sigh of thanks to God,  
Who comforts the forlorn ;  
While over her the Matron bent  
Sleep sealed her eyes, and stole  
Feeling from limbs with travel spent,  
And trouble from the soul.

Refreshed, the Wanderer rose at morn,  
And soon again was dight  
In those unworthy vestments worn  
Through long and perilous flight ;  
And "O beloved Nurse," she said,  
"My thanks with silent tears

Have unto Heaven and You been paid :  
Now listen to my fears !

Have you forgot"—and here she smiled—  
"The babbling flatteries  
You lavished on me when a child  
Disporting round your knees ?  
I was your lambkin, and your bird,  
Your star, your gem, your flower ;  
Light words, that were more lightly heard  
In many a cloudless hour !

The blossom you so fondly praised  
Is come to bitter fruit ;  
A mighty One upon me gazed ;  
I spurned his lawless suit,  
And must be hidden from his wrath :  
You, Foster-father dear,  
Will guide me in my forward path ;  
I may not tarry here !

I cannot bring to utter woe  
Your proved fidelity."—  
"Dear Child, sweet Mistress, say not so !  
For you we both would die."  
"Nay, nay, I come with semblance feigned  
And cheek embrowned by art ;  
Yet, being inwardly unstained,  
With courage will depart."

"But whither would you, could you, flee ?  
A poor Man's counsel take ;  
The Holy Virgin gives to me  
A thought for your dear sake ;  
Rest, shielded by our Lady's grace,  
And soon shall you be led  
Forth to a safe abiding-place,  
Where never foot doth tread."

## PART II

THE dwelling of this faithful pair  
In a straggling village stood,  
For One who breathed unquiet air  
A dangerous neighbourhood ;

But wide around lay forest ground  
With thickets rough and blind ;  
And pine-trees made a heavy shade  
Impervious to the wind.

And there, sequestered from the sight,  
Was spread a treacherous swamp,  
On which the noonday sun shed light  
As from a lonely lamp ;  
And midway in the unsafe morass,  
A single Island rose  
Of firm dry ground, with healthful grass  
Adorned, and shady boughs.

The Woodman knew, for such the craft  
This Russian vassal plied,  
That never fowler's gun, nor shaft  
Of archer, there was tried ;  
A sanctuary seemed the spot  
From all intrusion free ;  
And there he planned an artful Cot  
For perfect secrecy.

With earnest pains unchecked by dread  
Of Power's far-stretching hand,  
The bold good Man his labour sped  
At nature's pure command ;  
Heart-soothed, and busy as a wren,  
While, in a hollow nook,  
She moulds her sight-eluding den  
Above a murmuring brook.

His task accomplished to his mind,  
The twain ere break of day  
Creep forth, and through the forest wind  
Their solitary way ;  
Few words they speak, nor dare to slack  
Their pace from mile to mile,  
Till they have crossed the quaking marsh  
And reached the lonely Isle.

The sun above the pine-trees showed  
A bright and cheerful face ;  
And Ina looked for her abode,  
The promised hiding-place ;  
She sought in vain, the Woodman smiled ;  
No threshold could be seen,

Nor roof, nor window ;—all seemed wild  
As it had ever been.

Advancing, you might guess an hour,  
The front with such nice care  
Is masked, "if house it be or bower,"  
But in they entered are ;  
As shaggy as were wall and roof  
With branches intertwined,  
So smooth was all within, air-proof,  
And delicately lined :

And hearth was there, and maple dish,  
And cups in seemly rows,  
And couch—all ready to a wish  
For nurture or repose ;  
And Heaven doth to her virtue grant  
That here she may abide  
In solitude, with every want  
By cautious love supplied.

No queen, before a shouting crowd,  
Led on in bridal state,  
E'er struggled with a heart so proud,  
Entering her palace gate :  
Rejoiced to bid the world farewell,  
No saintly anchoress  
E'er took possession of her cell  
With deeper thankfulness.

"Father of all, upon thy care  
And mercy am I thrown ;  
Be thou my safeguard !"—such her prayer  
When she was left alone,  
Kneeling amid the wilderness  
When joy had passed away,  
And smiles, fond efforts of distress  
To hide what they betray !

The prayer is heard, the Saints have seen,  
Diffused through form and face  
Resolves devotedly serene ;  
That monumental grace  
Of Faith, which doth all passions tame  
That Reason *should* control ;  
And shows in the untrembling frame  
A statue of the soul.

## PART III

'Tis sung in ancient minstrelsy  
That Phœbus wont to wear  
The leaves of any pleasant tree  
Around his golden hair ;  
Till Daphne, desperate with pursuit  
Of his imperious love,  
At her own prayer transformed, took root,  
A laurel in the grove.

Then did the Penitent adorn  
His brow with laurel green ;  
And 'mid his bright locks never shorn  
No meaner leaf was seen ;  
And poets sage, through every age,  
About their temples wound  
The bay ; and conquerors thanked the Gods,  
With laurel chaplets crowned.

Into the mists of fabling Time  
So far runs back the praise  
Of Beauty, that disdains to climb  
Along forbidden ways ;  
That scorns temptation ; power defies  
Where mutual love is not ;  
And to the tomb for rescue flies  
When life would be a blot.

To this fair Votaress, a fate  
More mild doth Heaven ordain  
Upon her Island desolate ;  
And words, not breathed in vain,  
Might tell what intercourse she found,  
Her silence to endear ;  
What birds she tamed, what flowers the ground  
Sent forth her peace to cheer.

To one mute Presence, above all,  
Her soothed affections clung,  
A picture on the cabin wall  
By Russian usage hung—  
The Mother-maid, whose countenance bright  
With love abridged the day ;  
And, communed with by taper light,  
Chased spectral fears away.

And oft, as either Guardian came,  
The joy in that retreat  
Might any common friendship shame,  
So high their hearts would beat ;  
And to the lone Recluse, whate'er  
They brought, each visiting  
Was like the crowding of the year  
With a new burst of spring.

But, when she of her Parents thought,  
The pang was hard to bear ;  
And, if with all things not enwrought,  
That trouble still is near.  
Before her flight she had not dared  
Their constancy to prove,  
Too much the heroic Daughter feared  
The weakness of their love.

Dark is the past to them, and dark  
The future still must be,  
Till pitying Saints conduct her bark  
Into a safer sea—  
Or gentle Nature close her eyes,  
And set her Spirit free  
From the altar of this sacrifice,  
In vestal purity.

Yet, when above the forest-glooms  
The white swans southward passed,  
High as the pitch of their swift plumes  
Her fancy rode the blast ;  
And bore her toward the fields of France,  
Her Father's native land,  
To mingle in the rustic dance,  
The happiest of the band !

Of those beloved fields she oft  
Had heard her Father tell  
In phrase that now with echoes soft  
Haunted her lonely cell ;  
She saw the hereditary bowers,  
She heard the ancestral stream ;  
The Kremlin and its haughty towers  
Forgotten like a dream !

## PART IV

THE ever-changing Moon had traced  
Twelve times her monthly round,  
When through the unfrequented Waste  
Was heard a startling sound ;  
A shout thrice sent from one who chased  
At speed a wounded deer,  
Bounding through branches interlaced,  
And where the wood was clear.

The fainting creature took the marsh,  
And toward the Island fled,  
While plovers screamed with tumult harsh  
Above his antlered head ;  
This, Ina saw ; and, pale with fear,  
Shrunk to her citadel ;  
The desperate deer rushed on, and near  
The tangled covert fell.

Across the marsh, the game in view,  
The Hunter followed fast,  
Nor paused, till o'er the stag he blew  
A death-proclaiming blast ;  
Then, resting on her upright mind,  
Came forth the Maid—" In me  
Behold," she said, " a stricken Hind  
Pursued by destiny !

From your deportment, Sir ! I deem  
That you have worn a sword,  
And will not hold in light esteem  
A suffering woman's word ;  
There is my covert, there perchance  
I might have lain concealed,  
My fortunes hid, my countenance  
Not even to you revealed.

Tears might be shed, and I might pray,  
Crouching and terrified,  
That what has been unveiled to-day,  
You would in mystery hide ;  
But I will not defile with dust  
The knee that bends to adore  
The God in heaven ;—attend, be just ;  
This ask I, and no more !

I speak not of the winter's cold,  
For summer's heat exchanged,  
While I have lodged in this rough hold,  
From social life estranged ;  
Nor yet of trouble and alarms :  
High Heaven is my defence ;  
And every season has soft arms  
For injured Innocence.

From Moscow to the Wilderness  
It was my choice to come,  
Lest virtue should be harbourless,  
And honour want a home ;  
And happy were I, if the Czar  
Retain his lawless will,  
To end life here like this poor deer,  
Or a lamb on a green hill."

"Are you the Maid," the Stranger cried,  
"From Gallic parents sprung,  
Whose vanishing was rumoured wide,  
Sad theme for every tongue ;  
Who foiled an Emperor's eager quest ?  
You, Lady, forced to wear  
These rude habiliments, and rest  
Your head in this dark lair !"

But wonder, pity, soon were quelled ;  
And in her face and mien  
The soul's pure brightness he beheld  
Without a veil between :  
He loved, he hoped,—a holy flame  
Kindled 'mid rapturous tears ;  
The passion of a moment came  
As on the wings of years.

"Such bounty is no gift of chance,"  
Exclaimed he ; "righteous Heaven,  
Preparing your deliverance,  
To me the charge hath given.  
The Czar full oft in words and deeds  
Is stormy and self-willed ;  
But, when the Lady Catherine pleads,  
His violence is stilled.

Leave open to my wish the course,  
And I to her will go ;  
From that humane and heavenly source,  
Good, only good, can flow."  
Faint sanction given, the Cavalier  
Was eager to depart,  
Though question followed question, dear  
To the Maiden's filial heart.

Light was his step,—his hopes, more light,  
Kept pace with his desires ;  
And the fifth morning gave him sight  
Of Moscow's glittering spires.  
He sued :—heart-smitten by the wrong,  
To the lorn Fugitive  
The Emperor sent a pledge as strong  
As sovereign power could give.

O more than mighty change ! If e'er  
Amazement rose to pain,  
And joy's excess produced a fear  
Of something void and vain ;  
'Twas when the Parents, who had mourned  
So long the lost as dead,  
Beheld their only Child returned,  
The household floor to tread.

Soon gratitude gave way to love  
Within the Maiden's breast ;  
Delivered and Deliverer move  
In bridal garments drest ;  
Meek Catherine had her own reward ;  
The Czar bestowed a dower ;  
And universal Moscow shared  
The triumph of that hour.

Flowers strewed the ground ; the nuptial feast  
Was held with costly state ;  
And there, 'mid many a noble guest,  
The Foster-parents sate ;  
Encouraged by the imperial eye,  
They shrank not into shade ;  
Great was their bliss, the honour high  
To them and nature paid !

THE WAGGONER<sup>1</sup>

In Cairo's crowded streets  
The impatient Merchant, wondering, waits in vain,  
And Mecca saddens at the long delay.

THOMSON.

## CANTO FIRST

'Tis spent—this burning day of June!  
Soft darkness o'er its latest gleams is stealing;  
The buzzing dor-hawk, round and round, is wheeling,—  
That solitary bird  
Is all that can be heard  
In silence deeper far than that of deepest noon!  
Confiding Glow-worms, 'tis a night  
Propitious to your earth-born light!  
But, where the scattered stars are seen  
In hazy straits the clouds between,  
Each, in his station twinkling not,  
Seems changed into a pallid spot.  
The mountains against heaven's grave weight  
Rise up, and grow to wondrous height.  
The air, as in a lion's den,  
Is close and hot;—and now and then  
Comes a tired and sultry breeze  
With a haunting and a panting,  
Like the stilling of disease;  
But the dews allay the heat,  
And the silence makes it sweet.  
Hush, there is some one on the stir!  
'Tis Benjamin the Waggoner;  
Who long hath trod this toilsome way,  
Companion of the night and day.  
That far-off tinkling's drowsy cheer,  
Mixed with a faint yet grating sound  
In a moment lost and found,  
The Wain announces—by whose side  
Along the banks of Rydal Mere  
He paces on, a trusty Guide,—  
Listen! you can scarcely hear!  
Hither he his course is bending;—

<sup>1</sup> Written at Town-end, Grasmere. The characters and story from fact. For the dedicatory letter to Charles Lamb, see Wordsworth's Prose Works in present edition.

Now he leaves the lower ground,  
And up the craggy hill ascending  
Many a stop and stay he makes,  
Many a breathing-fit he takes ;—  
Steep the way and wearisome,  
Yet all the while his whip is dumb !

The Horses have worked with right good-will,  
And so have gained the top of the hill ;  
He was patient, they were strong,  
And now they smoothly glide along,  
Recovering breath, and pleased to win  
The praises of mild Benjamin.  
Heaven shield him from mishap and snare !  
But why so early with this prayer ?—  
Is it for threatenings in the sky ?  
Or for some other danger nigh ?  
No ; none is near him yet, though he  
Be one of much infirmity ;  
For at the bottom of the brow,  
Where once the DOVE and OLIVE-BOUGH  
Offered a greeting of good ale  
To all who entered Grasmere Vale ;  
And called on him who must depart  
To leave it with a jovial heart ;  
There, where the DOVE and OLIVE-BOUGH  
Once hung, a Poet harbours now,  
A simple water-drinking Bard ;  
Why need our Hero then (though frail  
His best resolves) be on his guard ?  
He marches by, secure and bold ;  
Yet while he thinks on times of old,  
It seems that all looks wondrous cold ;  
He shrugs his shoulders, shakes his head,  
And, for the honest folk within,  
It is a doubt with Benjamin  
Whether they be alive or dead !

*Here* is no danger,—none at all !  
Beyond his wish he walks secure ;  
But pass a mile—and *then* for trial,—  
Then for the pride of self-denial ;  
If he resist that tempting door,  
Which with such friendly voice will call ;  
If he resist those casement panes,  
And that bright gleam which thence will fall  
Upon his Leaders' bells and manes,

Inviting him with cheerful lure :  
 For still, though all be dark elsewhere,  
 Some shining notice will be *there*,  
 Of open house and ready fare.

The place to Benjamin right well  
 Is known, and by as strong a spell  
 As used to be that sign of love  
 And hope—the OLIVE-BOUGH and DOVE ;  
 He knows it to his cost, good Man !  
 Who does not know the famous SWAN ?  
 Object uncouth ! and yet our boast,  
 For it was painted by the Host ;  
 His own conceit the figure planned,  
 'Twas coloured all by his own hand ;  
 And that frail Child of thirsty clay,  
 Of whom I sing this rustic lay,  
 Could tell with self-dissatisfaction  
 Quaint stories of the bird's attraction !<sup>1</sup>

Well ! that is past—and in despite  
 Of open door and shining light.  
 And now the conqueror essays  
 The long ascent of Dunmail-raise ;  
 And with his team is gentle here  
 As when he clomb from Rydal Mere ;  
 His whip they do not dread—his voice  
 They only hear it to rejoice.  
 To stand or go is at *their* pleasure ;  
 Their efforts and their time they measure  
 By generous pride within the breast ;  
 And, while they strain, and while they rest,  
 He thus pursues his thoughts at leisure.

Now am I fairly safe to-night—  
 And with proud cause my heart is light :  
 I trespassed lately worse than ever—  
 But Heaven has blest a good endeavour ;  
 And, to my soul's content, I find  
 The evil One is left behind.  
 Yes, let my master fume and fret,  
 Here am I—with my horses yet !  
 My jolly team, he finds that ye  
 Will work for nobody but me !  
 Full proof of this the Country gained ;  
 It knows how ye were vexed and strained,

<sup>1</sup> This rude piece of self-taught art (such is the progress of refinement) has been supplanted by a professional production.

And forced unworthy stripes to bear,  
When trusted to another's care.  
Here was it—on this rugged slope,  
Which now ye climb with heart and hope,  
I saw you, between rage and fear,  
Plunge, and fling back a spiteful ear,  
And ever more and more confused,  
As ye were more and more abused :  
As chance would have it, passing by  
I saw you in that jeopardy :  
A word from me was like a charm ;  
Ye pulled together with one mind ;  
And your huge burthen, safe from harm,  
Moved like a vessel in the wind !  
—Yes, without me, up hills so high  
'Tis vain to strive for mastery.  
Then grieve not, jolly team ! though tough  
The road we travel, steep, and rough ;  
Though Rydal-heights and Dunmail-raise,  
And all their fellow banks and braes,  
Full often make you stretch and strain,  
And halt for breath and halt again,  
Yet to their sturdiness 'tis owing  
That side by side we still are going !  
While Benjamin in earnest mood  
His meditations thus pursued,  
A storm, which had been smothered long,  
Was growing inwardly more strong ;  
And, in its struggles to get free,  
Was busily employed as he.  
The thunder had begun to growl—  
He heard not, too intent of soul ;  
The air was now without a breath—  
He marked not that 'twas still as death.  
But soon large rain-drops on his head  
Fell with the weight of drops of lead :—  
He starts—and takes, at the admonition,  
A sage survey of his condition.  
The road is black before his eyes,  
Glimmering faintly where it lies ;  
Black is the sky—and every hill,  
Up to the sky, is blacker still—  
Sky, hill, and dale, one dismal room,  
Hung round and overhung with gloom ;  
Save that above a single height

Is to be seen a lurid light,  
 Above Helm-crag<sup>1</sup>—a streak half dead,  
 A burning of portentous red ;  
 And near that lurid light, full well  
 The ASTROLOGER, sage Sidrophel,  
 Where at his desk and book he sits,  
 Puzzling aloft his curious wits ;  
 He whose domain is held in common  
 With no one but the ANCIENT WOMAN,  
 Cowering beside her rifted cell,  
 As if intent on magic spell ;—  
 Dread pair, that, spite of wind and weather,  
 Still sit upon Helm-crag together !

The ASTROLOGER was not unseen  
 By solitary Benjamin ;  
 But total darkness came anon,  
 And he and everything was gone :  
 And suddenly a ruffling breeze,  
 (That would have rocked the sounding trees  
 Had aught of sylvan growth been there)  
 Swept through the Hollow long and bare :  
 The rain rushed down—the road was battered,  
 As with the force of billows shattered ;  
 The horses are dismayed, nor know  
 Whether they should stand or go ;  
 And Benjamin is groping near them,  
 Sees nothing, and can scarcely hear them.  
 He is astounded,—wonder not,—  
 With such a charge in such a spot ;  
 Astounded in the mountain gap  
 With thunder-peals, clap after clap,  
 Close-treading on the silent flashes—  
 And somewhere, as he thinks, by crashes  
 Among the rocks ; with weight of rain,  
 And sullen motions long and slow,  
 That to a dreary distance go—  
 Till, breaking in upon the dying strain,  
 A rending o'er his head begins the fray again.

Meanwhile, uncertain what to do,  
 And oftentimes compelled to halt,  
 The horses cautiously pursue  
 Their way, without mishap or fault ;

<sup>1</sup> A mountain of Grasmere, the broken summit of which presents two figures, full as distinctly shaped as that of the famous Cobbler near Arroquhar in Scotland.

And now have reached that pile of stones,  
Heaped over brave King Dunmail's bones ;  
His who had once supreme command,  
Last king of rocky Cumberland ;  
His bones, and those of all his Power  
Slain here in a disastrous hour !

When, passing through this narrow strait,  
Stony, and dark, and desolate,  
Benjamin can faintly hear  
A voice that comes from some one near,  
A female voice :—"Who'er you be,  
Stop," it exclaimed, "and pity me !"  
And, less in pity than in wonder,  
Amid the darkness and the thunder,  
The Waggoner, with prompt command,  
Summons his horses to a stand.

While, with increasing agitation,  
The Woman urged her supplication,  
In rueful words, with sobs between—  
The voice of tears that fell unseen ;  
There came a flash—a startling glare,  
And all Seat-Sandal was laid bare !  
'Tis not a time for nice suggestion,  
And Benjamin, without a question,  
Taking her for some way-worn rover,  
Said, "Mount, and get you under cover !"

Another voice, in tone as hoarse  
As a swollen brook with rugged course,  
Cried out, "Good brother, why so fast ?  
I've had a glimpse of you—*avast* !  
Or, since it suits you to be civil,  
Take her at once—for good and evil !"

"It is my Husband," softly said  
The Woman, as if half afraid :  
By this time she was snug within,  
Through help of honest Benjamin ;  
She and her Babe, which to her breast  
With thankfulness the Mother pressed ;  
And now the same strong voice more near  
Said cordially, "My Friend, what cheer ?  
Rough doings these ! as God's my judge.  
The sky owes somebody a grudge !  
We've had in half an hour or less  
A twelvemonth's terror and distress !"

Then Benjamin entreats the Man

Would mount, too, quickly as he can :  
 The Sailor—Sailor now no more,  
 But such he had been heretofore—  
 To courteous Benjamin replied,  
 " Go you your way, and mind not me ;  
 For I must have, whate'er betide,  
 My Ass and fifty things beside,—  
 Go, and I'll follow speedily ! "

The Waggon moves—and with its load  
 Descends along the sloping road ;  
 And the rough Sailor instantly  
 Turns to a little tent hard by :  
 For when, at closing-in of day,  
 The family had come that way,  
 Green pasture and the soft warm air  
 Tempted them to settle there.—  
 Green is the grass for beast to graze,  
 Around the stones of Dunmail-raise !

The Sailor gathers up his bed,  
 Takes down the canvas overhead ;  
 And, after farewell to the place,  
 A parting word—though not of grace,  
 Pursues, with Ass and all his store,  
 The way the Waggon went before.

## CANTO SECOND

If Wytheburn's modest House of prayer,  
 As lowly as the lowliest dwelling,  
 Had, with its belfry's humble stock,  
 A little pair that hang in air,  
 Been mistress also of a clock,  
 (And one, too, not in crazy plight)  
 Twelve strokes that clock would have been telling  
 Under the brow of old Helvellyn—  
 Its bead-roll of midnight,  
 Then, when the Hero of my tale  
 Was passing by, and, down the vale  
 (The vale now silent, hushed I ween  
 As if a storm had never been)  
 Proceeding with a mind at ease ;  
 While the old Familiar of the seas,  
 Intent to use his utmost haste,  
 Gained ground upon the Waggon fast,  
 And gives another lusty cheer ;  
 For spite of rumbling of the wheels,

A welcome greeting he can hear ;—  
It is a fiddle in its glee  
Dinning from the CHERRY TREE !

Thence the sound—the light is there—  
As Benjamin is now aware,  
Who, to his inward thoughts confined,  
Had almost reached the festive door,  
When, startled by the Sailor's roar,  
He hears a sound and sees a light,  
And in a moment calls to mind  
That 'tis the village MERRY-NIGHT !<sup>1</sup>

Although before in no dejection,  
At this insidious recollection  
His heart with sudden joy is filled,—  
His ears are by the music thrilled,  
His eyes take pleasure in the road  
Glittering before him bright and broad ;  
And Benjamin is wet and cold,  
And there are reasons manifold  
That make the good, tow'rd's which he's yearning,  
Look fairly like a lawful earning.

Nor has thought time to come and go,  
To vibrate between yes and no ;  
For, cries the Sailor, "Glorious chance  
That blew us hither !—let him dance,  
Who can or will !—my honest soul,  
Our treat shall be a friendly bowl !"   
He draws him to the door—"Come in,  
Come, come," cries he to Benjamin !  
And Benjamin—ah, woe is me !  
Gave the word—the horses heard  
And halted, though reluctantly.

"Blithe souls and lightsome hearts have we,  
Feasting at the CHERRY TREE !"   
This was the outside proclamation,  
This was the inside salutation ;  
What bustling—jostling—high and low !  
A universal overflow !  
What tankards foaming from the tap !  
What store of cakes in every lap !  
What thumping—stumping—overhead !  
The thunder had not been more busy :

<sup>1</sup> A term well known in the North of England, and applied to rural Festivals where young persons meet in the evening for the purpose of dancing.

With such a stir you would have said,  
 This little place may well be dizzy !  
 'Tis who can dance with greatest vigour—  
 'Tis what can be most prompt and eager ;  
 As if it heard the fiddle's call,  
 The pewter clatters on the wall ;  
 The very bacon shows its feeling,  
 Swinging from the smoky ceiling !

A steaming bowl, a blazing fire,  
 What greater good can heart desire ?  
 'Twere worth a wise man's while to try  
 The utmost anger of the sky :  
 To *seek* for thoughts of a gloomy cast,  
 If such the bright amends at last.  
 Now should you say I judge amiss,  
 The CHERRY TREE shows proof of this ;  
 For soon of all the happy there,  
 Our Travellers are the happiest pair ;  
 All care with Benjamin is gone—  
 A Cæsar past the Rubicon !  
 He thinks not of his long, long strife ;—  
 The Sailor, Man by nature gay,  
 Hath no resolves to throw away ;  
 And he hath now forgot his Wife,  
 Hath quite forgotten her—or may be  
 Thinks her the luckiest soul on earth,  
 Within that warm and peaceful berth,

Under cover,

Terror over,

Sleeping by her sleeping Baby.

With bowl that sped from hand to hand,  
 The gladdest of the gladsome band,  
 Amid their own delight and fun,  
 They hear—when every dance is done,  
 When every whirling bout is o'er—  
 The fiddle's *squeak*<sup>1</sup>—that call to bliss,  
 Ever followed by a kiss ;  
 They envy not the happy lot,  
 But enjoy their own the more !

While thus our jocund Travellers fare,  
 Up springs the Sailor from his chair—  
 Limp (for I might have told before  
 That he was lame) across the floor—

<sup>1</sup> At the close of each strathspey, or jig, a particular note from the fiddle summons the Rustic to the agreeable duty of saluting his partner.

Is gone—returns—and with a prize ;  
With what ?—a Ship of lusty size ;  
A gallant stately Man-of-war,  
Fixed on a smoothly-sliding car.  
Surprise to all, but most surprise  
To Benjamin, who rubs his eyes,  
Not knowing that he had befriended  
A Man so gloriously attended !

" This," cries the Sailor, " a Third-rate is—  
Stand back, and you shall see her gratis !  
This was the Flag-ship at the Nile,  
The Vanguard—you may smirk and smile,  
But, pretty Maid, if you look near,  
You'll find you've much in little here !  
A nobler ship did never swim,  
And you shall see her in full trim :  
I'll set, my friends, to do you honour,  
Set every inch of sail upon her."  
So said, so done ; and masts, sails, yards,  
He names them all ; and interlards  
His speech with uncouth terms of art,  
Accomplished in the showman's part ;  
And then, as from a sudden check,  
Cries out—" 'Tis there, the quarter-deck  
On which brave Admiral Nelson stood—  
A sight that would have roused your blood !  
One eye he had, which, bright as ten,  
Burned like a fire among his men ;  
Let this be land, and that be sea,  
Here lay the French—and *thus* came we !"

Hushed was by this the fiddle's sound,  
The dancers all were gathered round,  
And, such the stillness of the house,  
You might have heard a nibbling mouse ;  
While, borrowing helps where'er he may,  
The Sailor through the story runs  
Of ships to ships and guns to guns ;  
And does his utmost to display  
The dismal conflict, and the might  
And terror of that marvellous night !  
" A bowl, a bowl of double measure,"  
Cries Benjamin, " a draught of length,  
To Nelson, England's pride and treasure,  
Her bulwark and her tower of strength !"  
When Benjamin had seized the bowl,

The mastiff, from beneath the waggon,  
 Where he lay, watchful as a dragon,  
 Rattled his chain ;—'twas all in vain,  
 For Benjamin, triumphant soul !  
 He heard the monitory growl ;  
 Heard—and in opposition quaffed  
 A deep, determined, desperate draught !  
 Nor did the battered Tar forget,  
 Or flinch from what he deemed his debt :  
 Then, like a hero crowned with laurel,  
 Back to her place the ship he led ;  
 Wheeled her back in full apparel ;  
 And so, flag flying at mast-head,  
 Re-yoked her to the Ass :—anon,  
 Cries Benjamin, " We must be gone."  
 Thus, after two hours' hearty stay,  
 Again behold them on their way !

## CANTO THIRD

RIGHT gladly had the horses stirred,  
 When they the wished-for greeting heard,  
 The whip's loud notice from the door,  
 That they were free to move once more.  
 You think, those doings must have bred  
 In them disheartening doubts and dread ;  
 No, not a horse of all the eight,  
 Although it be a moonless night,  
 Fears either for himself or freight ;  
 For this they know (and let it hide,  
 In part, the offences of their guidè)  
 That Benjamin, with clouded brains,  
 Is worth the best with all their pains ;  
 And, if they had a prayer to make,  
 The prayer would be that they may take  
 With him whatever comes in course,  
 The better fortune or the worse ;  
 That no one else may have business near them,  
 And, drunk or sober, he may steer them.  
 So, forth in dauntless mood they fare,  
 And with them goes the guardian pair.  
 Now, heroes, for the true commotion,  
 The triumph of your late devotion,  
 Can aught on earth impede delight,  
 Still mounting to a higher height ;

And higher still—a greedy flight !  
Can any low-born care pursue her,  
Can any mortal clog come to her ?  
No notion have they—not a thought,  
That is from joyless regions brought !  
And, while they coast the silent lake,  
Their inspiration I partake ;  
Share their empyreal spirits—yea,  
With their enraptured vision, see—  
O fancy—what a jubilee !  
What shifting pictures—clad in gleams  
Of colour bright as feverish dreams !  
Earth, spangled sky, and lake serene,  
Involved and restless all—a scene  
Pregnant with mutual exaltation,  
Rich change, and multiplied creation !  
This sight to me the Muse imparts ;—  
And then, what kindness in their hearts !  
What tears of rapture, what vow-making,  
Profound entreaties, and hand-shaking !  
What solemn, vacant, interlacing,  
As if they'd fall asleep embracing !  
Then, in the turbulence of glee,  
And in the excess of amity,  
Says Benjamin, " That Ass of thine,  
He spoils thy sport, and hinders mine :  
If he were tethered to the waggon,  
He'd drag as well what he is dragging,  
And we, as brother should with brother,  
Might trudge it alongside each other ! "

Forthwith, obedient to command,  
The horses made a quiet stand ;  
And to the waggon's skirts was tied  
The Creature, by the Mastiff's side,  
The Mastiff wondering, and perplex  
With dread of what will happen next ;  
And thinking it but sorry cheer,  
To have such company so near !

This new arrangement made, the Wain  
Through the still night proceeds again ;  
No Moon hath risen her light to lend ;  
But indistinctly may be kenned  
The VANGUARD, following close behind,  
Sails spread, as if to catch the wind !

" Thy wife and child are snug and warm,

Thy ship will travel without harm ;  
I like," said Benjamin, "her shape and stature :  
And this of mine—this bulky creature  
Of which I have the steering—this,  
Seen fairly, is not much amiss !  
We want your streamers, friend, you know ;  
But, altogether as we go,  
We make a kind of handsome show !  
Among these hills, from first to last,  
We've weathered many a furious blast ;  
Hard passage forcing on, with head  
Against the storm, and canvas spread.  
I hate a boaster ; but to thee  
Will say't, who know'st both land and sea,  
The unluckiest hulk that stems the brine  
Is hardly worse beset than mine,  
When cross-winds on her quarter beat ;  
And, fairly lifted from my feet,  
I stagger onward—heaven knows how ;  
But not so pleasantly as now :  
Poor pilot I, by snows confounded,  
And many a foundrous pit surrounded !  
Yet here we are, by night and day  
Grinding through rough and smooth our way ;  
Through foul and fair our task fulfilling ;  
And long shall be so yet—God willing !"  
"Ay," said the Tar, "through fair and foul—  
But save us from yon screeching owl !"  
That instant was begun a fray  
Which called their thoughts another way :  
The mastiff, ill-conditioned carl !  
What must he do but growl and snarl,  
Still more and more dissatisfied  
With the meek comrade at his side !  
Till, not incensed though put to proof,  
The Ass, uplifting a hind hoof,  
Salutes the Mastiff on the head ;  
And so were better manners bred,  
And all was calmed and quieted.  
"Yon screech-owl," says the Sailor, turning  
Back to his former cause of mourning,  
"Yon owl!—pray God that all be well !  
'Tis worse than any funeral bell ;  
As sure as I've the gift of sight,  
We shall be meeting ghosts to-night !"

—Said Benjamin, "This whip shall lay  
A thousand, if they cross our way.  
I know that Wanton's noisy station,  
I know him and his occupation ;  
The jolly bird hath learned his cheer  
Upon the banks of Windermere ;  
Where a tribe of them make merry,  
Mocking the Man that keeps the ferry ;  
Hallooing from an open throat,  
Like travellers shouting for a boat.  
—The tricks he learned at Windermere  
This vagrant owl is playing here—  
That is the worst of his employment :  
He's at the top of his enjoyment !"

This explanation stilled the alarm,  
Cured the foreboder like a charm ;  
This, and the manner, and the voice,  
Summoned the Sailor to rejoice ;  
His heart is up—he fears no evil  
From life or death, from man or devil ;  
He wheels—and, making many stops,  
Brandished his crutch against the mountain tops ;  
And, while he talked of blows and scars,  
Benjamin, among the stars,  
Beheld a dancing—and a glancing ;  
Such retreating and advancing  
As, I ween, was never seen  
In bloodiest battle since the days of Mars !

## CANTO FOURTH

THUS they, with freaks of proud delight,  
Beguile the remnant of the night ;  
And many a snatch of jovial song  
Regales them as they wind along ;  
While to the music, from on high,  
The echoes make a glad reply.—  
But the sage Muse the revel heeds  
No farther than her story needs ;  
Nor will she servilely attend  
The loitering journey to its end.  
—Blithe spirits of her own impel  
The Muse, who scents the morning air,  
To take of this transported pair  
A brief and unproved farewell :  
To quit the slow-paced waggon's side,

And wander down yon hawthorn dell,  
 With murmuring Greta for her guide.  
 —There doth she ken the awful form  
 Of Raven-crag—black as a storm—  
 Glimmering through the twilight pale ;  
 And Ghimmer-crag,<sup>1</sup> his tall twin brother,  
 Each peering forth to meet the other :—  
 And, while she roves through St. John's Vale,  
 Along the smooth unpathwayed plain,  
 By sheep-track or through cottage lane,  
 Where no disturbance comes to intrude  
 Upon the pensive solitude,  
 Her unsuspecting eye, perchance,  
 With the rude shepherd's favoured glance,  
 Beholds the faeries in array,  
 Whose party-coloured garments gay  
 The silent company betray :  
 Red, green, and blue ; a moment's sight !  
 For Skiddaw-top with rosy light  
 Is touched—and all the band take flight.  
 —Fly also, Muse ! and from the dell  
 Mount to the ridge of Nathdale Fell ;  
 Thence, look thou forth o'er wood and lawn  
 Hoar with the frost-like dews of dawn ;  
 Across yon meadowy bottom look,  
 Where close fogs hide their parent brook ;  
 And see, beyond that hamlet small,  
 The ruined towers of Threlkeld-hall,  
 Lurking in a double shade,  
 By trees and lingering twilight made !  
 There, at Blencathara's rugged feet,  
 Sir Lancelot gave a safe retreat  
 To noble Clifford ; from annoy  
 Concealed the persecuted boy,  
 Well pleased in rustic garb to feed  
 His flock, and pipe on shepherd's reed  
 Among this multitude of hills,  
 Crag, woodlands, waterfalls, and rills ;  
 Which soon the morning shall enfold,  
 From east to west, in ample vest  
 Of massy gloom and radiance bold.

The mists, that o'er the streamlet's bed  
 Hung low, begin to rise and spread ;  
 Even while I speak, their skirts of grey

<sup>1</sup> The crag of the ewe lamb.

Are smitten by a silver ray ;  
And lo !—up Castrigg's naked steep  
(Where, smoothly urged, the vapours sweep  
Along—and scatter and divide,  
Like fleecy clouds self-multiplied)  
The stately waggon is ascending,  
With faithful Benjamin attending,  
Apparent now beside his team—  
Now lost amid a glittering steam :  
And with him goes his Sailor-friend,  
By this time near their journey's end ;  
And, after their high-minded riot,  
Sickening into thoughtful quiet ;  
As if the morning's pleasant hour  
Had for their joys a killing power.  
And, sooth, for Benjamin a vein  
Is opened of still deeper pain  
As if his heart by notes were stung  
From out the lowly hedge-rows slung ;  
As if the Warbler lost in light  
Reproved his soarings of the night,  
In strains of rapture pure and holy  
Upbraided his distempered folly.

Drooping is he, his step is dull ;  
But the horses stretch and pull ;  
With increasing vigour climb,  
Eager to repair lost time ;  
Whether, by their own desert,  
Knowing what cause there is for shame,  
They are labouring to avert  
As much as may be of the blame,  
Which, they foresee, must soon alight  
Upon *his* head, whom, in despite  
Of all his failings, they love best ;  
Whether for him they are distressed,  
Or, by length of fasting roused,  
Are impatient to be housed :  
Up against the hill they strain,  
Tugging at the iron chain,  
Tugging all with might and main,  
Last and foremost, every horse  
To the utmost of his force !  
And the smoke and respiration,  
Rising like an exhalation,  
Blend with the mist—a moving shroud

To form, an undissolving cloud ;  
 Which, with slant ray, the merry sun  
 Takes delight to play upon.  
 Never golden-haired Apollo,  
 Pleased some favourite chief to follow  
 Through accidents of peace or war,  
 In a perilous moment threw  
 Around the object of his care  
 Veil of such celestial hue ;  
 Interposed so bright a screen—  
 Him and his enemies between !

Alas ! what boots it ?—who can hide,  
 When the malicious Fates are bent  
 On working out an ill intent ?  
 Can destiny be turned aside ?  
 No—sad progress of my story !  
 Benjamin, this outward glory  
 Cannot shield thee from thy Master,  
 Who from Keswick has pricked forth,  
 Sour and surly as the north ;  
 And, in fear of some disaster,  
 Comes to give what help he may,  
 And to hear what thou canst say ;  
 If, as needs he must forebode,  
 Thou hast been loitering on the road !  
 His fears, his doubts, may now take flight—  
 The wished-for object is in sight ;  
 Yet, trust the Muse, it rather hath  
 Stirred him up to livelier wrath ;  
 Which he stifles, moody man !  
 With all the patience that he can ;  
 To the end that, at your meeting,  
 He may give thee decent greeting.

There he is—resolved to stop,  
 Till the waggon gains the top ;  
 But stop he cannot—must advance :  
 Him Benjamin, with lucky glance,  
 Espies—and instantly is ready,  
 Self-collected, poised, and steady :  
 And, to be the better seen,  
 Issues from his radiant shroud,  
 From his close-attending cloud,  
 With careless air and open mien.  
 Erect his port, and firm his going ;  
 So struts yon cock that now is crowing ;

And the morning light in grace  
Strikes upon his lifted face,  
Hurrying the pallid hue away  
That might his trespasses betray.  
But what can all avail to clear him,  
Or what need of explanation,  
Parley or interrogation?  
For the Master sees, alas!  
That unhappy Figure near him,  
Limping o'er the dewy grass,  
Where the road it fringes, sweet,  
Soft and cool to way-worn feet;  
And, O indignity! an Ass,  
By his noble Mastiff's side,  
Tethered to the waggon's tail:  
And the ship, in all her pride,  
Following after in full sail!  
Not to speak of babe and mother;  
Who, contented with each other,  
And snug as birds in leafy arbour,  
Find, within, a blessed harbour!

With eager eyes the Master pries;  
Looks in and out, and through and through;  
Says nothing—till at last he spies  
A wound upon the Mastiff's head,  
A wound, where plainly might be read  
What feats an Ass's hoof can do!  
But drop the rest:—this aggravation,  
This complicated provocation,  
A hoard of grievances unsealed;  
All past forgiveness it repealed;  
And thus, and through distempered blood  
On both sides, Benjamin the good,  
The patient, and the tender-hearted,  
Was from his team and waggon parted;  
When duty of that day was o'er,  
Laid down his whip—and served no more.—  
Nor could the waggon long survive,  
Which Benjamin had ceased to drive:  
It lingered on;—guide after guide  
Ambitiously the office tried;  
But each unmanageable hill  
Called for *his* patience and *his* skill;—  
And sure it is, that through this night,  
And what the morning brought to light,

Two losses had we to sustain,  
We lost both WAGGONER and WAIN !

---

Accept, O Friend, for praise or blame,  
The gift of this adventurous song ;  
A record which I dared to frame,  
Though timid scruples checked me long ;  
They checked me—and I left the theme  
Untouched—in spite of many a gleam  
Of fancy which thereon was shed,  
Like pleasant sunbeams shifting still  
Upon the side of a distant hill :  
But Nature might not be gainsaid ;  
For what I have and what I miss  
I sing of these ;—it makes my bliss !  
Nor is it I who play the part,  
But a shy spirit in my heart,  
That comes and goes—will sometimes leap  
From hiding-places ten years deep ;  
Or haunts me with familiar face,  
Returning, like a ghost unladen,  
Until the debt I owe be paid.  
Forgive me, then ; for I had been  
On friendly terms with this Machine :  
In him, while he was wont to trace  
Our roads, through many a long year's space,  
A living almanack had we ;  
We had a speaking diary,  
That in this uneventful place  
Gave to the days a mark and name  
By which we knew them when they came.  
—Yes, I, and all about me here,  
Through all the changes of the year,  
Had seen him through the mountains go,  
In pomp of mist or pomp of snow,  
Majestically huge and slow :  
Or, with a milder grace adorning  
The landscape of a summer's morning ;  
While Grasmere smoothed her liquid plain  
The moving image to detain ;  
And mighty Fairfield, with a chime  
Of echoes, to his march kept time ;  
When little other business stirred,  
And little other sound was heard ;  
In that delicious hour of balm,

Stillness, solitude, and calm,  
 While yet the valley is arrayed,  
 On this side with a sober shade ;  
 On that is prodigally bright—  
 Crag, lawn, and wood—with rosy light.  
 —But most of all, thou Lordly Wain !  
 I wish to have thee here again,  
 When windows flap and chimney roars,  
 And all is dismal out of doors ;  
 And, sitting by my fire, I see  
 Eight sorry carts, no less a train ;  
 Unworthy successors of thee,  
 Come straggling through the wind and rain !  
 And oft, as they pass slowly on,  
 Beneath my windows, one by one,  
 See, perched upon the naked height,  
 The summit of a cumbrous freight,  
 A single traveller—and there  
 Another ; then perhaps a pair—  
 The lame, the sickly, and the old ;  
 Men, women, heartless with the cold ;  
 And babes in wet and starveling plight :  
 Which once, be weather as it might,  
 Had still a nest within a nest,  
 Thy shelter—and their mother's breast !  
 Then most of all, then far the most,  
 Do I regret what we have lost ;  
 Am grieved for that unhappy sin  
 Which robbed us of good Benjamin ;  
 And of his stately Charge, which none  
 Could keep alive when He was gone !

(1805)

## THE WHITE DOE OF RYLSTONE ;

OR, THE FATE OF THE NORTONS<sup>1</sup>

## DEDICATION

IN trellised shed with clustering roses gay,  
 And, MARY ! oft beside our blazing fire,  
 When years of wedded life were as a day  
 Whose current answers to the heart's desire,

<sup>1</sup> During the Summer of 1807 I visited, for the first time, the beautiful country that surrounds Bolton Priory in Yorkshire ; and the Poem of "The White Doe," founded upon a Tradition connected with that place, was composed at the close of the same year.

Did we together read in Spenser's Lay  
How Una, sad of soul—in sad attire,  
The gentle Una, of celestial birth,  
To seek her Knight went wandering o'er the earth.

Ah, then, Beloved ! pleasing was the smart,  
And the tear precious in compassion shed  
For Her, who, pierced by sorrow's thrilling dart,  
Did meekly bear the pang unmerited ;  
Meek as that emblem of her lowly heart  
The milk-white Lamb which in a line she led,—  
And faithful, loyal in her innocence,  
Like the brave Lion slain in her defence.

Notes could we hear as of a fairy shell  
Attuned to words with sacred wisdom fraught ;  
Free Fancy prized each specious miracle,  
And all its finer inspiration caught ;  
Till in the bosom of our rustic Cell  
We by a lamentable change were taught  
That "bliss with mortal Man may not abide :"  
How nearly joy and sorrow are allied !

For us the stream of fiction ceased to flow,  
For us the voice of melody was mute.  
—But, as soft gales dissolve the dreary snow,  
And give the timid herbage leave to shoot,  
Heaven's breathing influence failed not to bestow  
A timely promise of unlooked-for fruit,  
Fair fruit of pleasure and serene content  
From blossoms wild of fancies innocent.

It soothed us—it beguiled us—then, to hear  
Once more of troubles wrought by magic spell ;  
And griefs whose sery motion comes not near  
The pangs that tempt the Spirit to rebel :  
Then, with mild Una in her sober cheer,  
High over hill and low adown the dell  
Again we wandered, willing to partake  
All that she suffered for her dear Lord's sake.

Then, too, this Song of *mine* once more could please,  
Where anguish, strange as dreams of restless sleep,  
Is tempered and allayed by sympathies  
Aloft ascending, and descending deep,  
Even to the inferior Kinds ; whom forest-trees  
Protect from beating sunbeams, and the sweep  
Of the sharp winds ;—fair Creatures !—to whom Heaven  
A calm and sinless life, with love, hath given.

This tragic Story cheered us ; for it speaks  
Of female patience winning firm repose ;  
And, of the recompense that conscience seeks,  
A bright, encouraging, example shows ;  
Needful when o'er wide realms the tempest breaks,  
Needful amid life's ordinary woes ;—  
Hence, not for them unfitted who would bless  
A happy hour with holier happiness.

He serves the Muses erringly and ill,  
Whose aim is pleasure light and fugitive ;  
Oh, that my mind were equal to fulfil  
The comprehensive mandate which they give—  
Vain aspiration of an earnest will !  
Yet in this moral Strain a power may live,  
Beloved Wife ! such solace to impart  
As it hath yielded to thy tender heart.

RYDAL MOUNT, WESTMORELAND,  
*April 20, 1815.*

" Action is transitory—a step, a blow,  
The motion of a muscle—this way or that—  
'Tis done ; and in the after-vacancy  
We wonder at ourselves like men betrayed :  
Suffering is permanent, obscure and dark,  
And has the nature of infinity.  
Yet through that darkness (infinite though it seem  
And irremovable) gracious openings lie,  
By which the soul—with patient steps of thought  
Now toiling, wafted now on wings of prayer—  
May pass in hope, and, though from mortal bonds  
Yet undelivered, rise with sure ascent  
Even to the fountain-head of peace divine."

" They that deny a God, destroy Man's nobility : for certainly Man is of kinn to the Beast by his Body ; and if he be not of kinn to God by his Spirit, he is a base, ignoble Creature. It destroys likewise Magnanimity, and the raising of humane Nature : for take an example of a Dogg, and mark what a generosity and courage he will put on, when he finds himself maintained by a Man, who to him is instead of a God, or Melior Natura. Which courage is manifestly such, as that Creature without that confidence of a better Nature than his own could never attain. So Man, when he resteth and assureth himself upon Divine protection and favour, gathereth a force and faith which human Nature in itself could not obtain."

LORD BACON.

#### CANTO FIRST

FROM Bolton's old monastic tower  
The bells ring loud with gladsome power  
The sun shines bright ; the fields are gay  
With people in their best array  
Of stole and doublet, hood and scarf,  
Along the banks of crystal Wharf,  
Through the Vale retired and lowly,  
Trooping to that summons holy.  
And, up among the moorlands, see  
What sprinklings of blithe company !  
Of lasses and of shepherd grooms,  
That down the steep hills force their way,

Like cattle through the budded brooms;  
 Path, or no path, what care they?  
 And thus in joyous mood they hie  
 To Bolton's mouldering Priory.

What would they there?—Full fifty years  
 That sumptuous Pile, with all its peers,  
 Too harshly hath been doomed to taste  
 The bitterness of wrong and waste:  
 Its courts are ravaged; but the tower  
 Is standing with a voice of power,  
 That ancient voice which wont to call  
 To mass or some high festival;  
 And in the shattered fabric's heart  
 Remaineth one protected part;  
 A Chapel, like a wild-bird's nest,  
 Closely embowered and trimly drest;  
 And thither young and old repair,  
 This Sabbath-day, for praise and prayer.

Fast the churchyard fills;—anon  
 Look again, and they all are gone;  
 The cluster round the porch, and the folk  
 Who sate in the shade of the Prior's Oak!  
 And scarcely have they disappeared  
 Ere the prelusive hymn is heard:—  
 With one consent the people rejoice,  
 Filling the church with a lofty voice!  
 They sing a service which they feel:  
 For 'tis the sunrise now of zeal;  
 Of a pure faith the vernal prime—  
 In great Eliza's golden time.

A moment ends the fervent din,  
 And all is hushed, without and within;  
 For though the priest, more tranquilly,  
 Recites the holy liturgy,  
 The only voice which you can hear  
 Is the river murmuring near.

—When soft!—the dusky trees between,  
 And down the path through the open green,  
 Where is no living thing to be seen;  
 And through yon gateway, where is found,  
 Beneath the arch with ivy bound,  
 Free entrance to the churchyard ground—  
 Comes gliding in with lovely gleam,  
 Comes gliding in serene and slow,  
 Soft and silent as a dream,

## The White Doe of Rylstone 191

A solitary Doe!

White she is as lily of June,  
And beauteous as the silver moon  
When out of sight the clouds are driven  
And she is left alone in heaven;  
Or like a ship some gentle day  
In sunshine sailing far away,  
A glittering ship, that hath the plain  
Of ocean for her own domain.

Lie silent in your graves, ye dead!  
Lie quiet in your churchyard bed!  
Ye living, tend your holy cares;  
Ye multitude, pursue your prayers;  
And blame not me if my heart and sight  
Are occupied with one delight!  
'Tis a work for sabbath hours  
If I with this bright Creature go:  
Whether she be of forest bowers,  
From the bowers of earth below;  
Or a Spirit for one day given,  
A pledge of grace from purest heaven.

What harmonious pensive changes  
Wait upon her as she ranges  
Round and through this Pile of state  
Overthrown and desolate!  
Now a step or two her way  
Leads through space of open day,  
Where the enamoured sunny light  
Brightens her that was so bright;  
Now doth a delicate shadow fall,  
Falls upon her like a breath,  
From some lofty arch or wall,  
As she passes underneath:  
Now some gloomy nook partakes  
Of the glory that she makes,—  
High-ribbed vault of stone, or cell,  
With perfect cunning framed as well  
Of stone, and ivy, and the spread  
Of the elder's bushy head;  
Some jealous and forbidding cell,  
That doth the living stars repel,  
And where no flower hath leave to dwell.

The presence of this wandering Doe  
Fills many a damp obscure recess  
With lustre of a saintly show;

And, reappearing, she no less  
 Sheds on the flowers that round her blow  
 A more than sunny liveliness.  
 But say, among these holy places,  
 Which thus assiduously she paces,  
 Comes she with a votary's task,  
 Rite to perform, or boon to ask?  
 Fair Pilgrim! harbours she a sense  
 Of sorrow, or of reverence?  
 Can she be grieved for quire or shrine,  
 Crushed as if by wrath divine?  
 For what survives of house where God  
 Was worshipped, or where Man abode;  
 For old magnificence undone;  
 Or for the gentler work begun  
 By Nature, softening and concealing,  
 And busy with a hand of healing?  
 Mourns she for lordly chamber's hearth  
 That to the sapling ash gives birth;  
 For dormitory's length laid bare  
 Where the wild rose blossoms fair;  
 Or altar, whence the cross was rent,  
 Now rich with mossy ornament?  
 —She sees a warrior carved in stone,  
 Among the thick weeds, stretched alone;  
 A warrior, with his shield of pride  
 Cleaving humbly to his side,  
 And hands in resignation prest,  
 Palm to palm, on his tranquil breast;  
 As little she regards the sight  
 As a common creature might:  
 If she be doomed to inward care,  
 Or service, it must lie elsewhere.  
 —But hers are eyes serenely bright,  
 And on she moves—with pace how light!  
 Nor spares to stoop her head, and taste  
 The dewy turf with flowers bestrown;  
 And thus she fares, until at last  
 Beside the ridge of a grassy grave  
 In quietness she lays her down;  
 Gentle as a weary wave  
 Sinks, when the summer breeze hath died  
 Against an anchored vessel's side;  
 Even so, without distress, doth she  
 Lie down in peace, and lovingly.

The day is placid in its going,  
To a lingering motion bound,  
Like the crystal stream now flowing  
With its softest summer sound :  
So the balmy minutes pass,  
While this radiant Creature lies  
Couched upon the dewy grass,  
Pensively with downcast eyes.  
—But now again the people raise  
With awful cheer a voice of praise ;  
It is the last, the parting song ;  
And from the temple forth they throng,  
And quickly spread themselves abroad,  
While each pursues his several road.  
But some—a variegated band  
Of middle-aged, and old, and young,  
And little children by the hand  
Upon their leading mothers hung—  
With mute obeisance gladly paid  
Turn towards the spot, where, full in view,  
The white Doe, to her service true,  
Her sabbath couch has made.

It was a solitary mound ;  
Which two spears' length of level ground  
Did from all other graves divide :  
As if in some respect of pride ;  
Or melancholy's sickly mood,  
Still shy of human neighbourhood ;  
Or guilt, that humbly would express  
A penitential loneliness.

"Look ! there she is, my Child ! draw near ;  
She fears not, wherefore should we fear ?  
She means no harm ;"—but still the Boy,  
To whom the words were softly said,  
Hung back, and smiled, and blushed for joy,  
A shame-faced blush of glowing red !  
Again the Mother whispered low,  
"Now you have seen the famous Doe ;  
From Rylstone she hath found her way  
Over the hills this sabbath day ;  
Her work, whate'er it be, is done,  
And she will depart when we are gone ;  
Thus doth she keep, from year to year,  
Her sabbath morning, foul or fair."

Bright was the Creature, as in dreams



The Boy had seen her, yea, more bright ;  
 But is she truly what she seems ?  
 He asks with insecure delight,  
 Asks of himself, and doubts,—and still  
 The doubt returns against his will :  
 Though he, and all the standers-by,  
 Could tell a tragic history  
 Of facts divulged, wherein appear  
 Substantial motive, reason clear,  
 Why thus the milk-white Doe is found  
 Couchant beside that lonely mound ;  
 And why she duly loves to pace  
 The circuit of this hallowed place.  
 Nor to the Child's inquiring mind  
 Is such perplexity confined :  
 For, spite of sober Truth that sees  
 A world of fixed remembrances  
 Which to this mystery belong,  
 If, undeceived, my skill can trace  
 The characters of every face,  
 There lack not strange delusion here,  
 Conjecture vague, and idle fear,  
 And superstitious fancies strong,  
 Which do the gentle Creature wrong.  
 That bearded, staff-supported Sire—  
 Who in his boyhood often fed  
 Full cheerily on convent-bread  
 And heard old tales by the convent-fire,  
 And to his grave will go with scars,  
 Relics of long and distant wars—  
 That Old Man, studious to expound  
 The spectacle, is mounting high  
 To days of dim antiquity ;  
 When Lady Aaliza mourned  
 Her Son, and felt in her despair  
 The pang of unavailing prayer ;  
 Her Son in Wharf's abysses drowned,  
 The noble Boy of Egremound.  
 From which affliction—when the grace  
 Of God had in her heart found place—  
 A pious structure, fair to see,  
 Rose up, this stately Priory !  
 The Lady's work ;—but now laid low ;  
 To the grief of her soul that doth come and go,  
 In the beautiful form of this innocent Doe :

## The White Doe of Rylstone 195

Which, though seemingly doomed in its breast to sustain  
A softened remembrance of sorrow and pain,  
Is spotless, and holy, and gentle, and bright ;  
And glides o'er the earth like an angel of light.

Pass, pass who will, yon chantry door ;  
And, through the chink in the fractured floor  
Look down, and see a griesly sight ;  
A vault where the bodies are buried upright !  
There, face by face, and hand by hand,  
The Claphams and Mauleverers stand ;  
And, in his place, among son and sire,  
Is John de Clapham, that fierce Esquire,  
A valiant man, and a name of dread  
In the ruthless wars of the White and Red ;  
Who dragged Earl Pembroke from Banbury church  
And smote off his head on the stones of the porch !  
Look down among them, if you dare ;  
Oft does the White Doe loiter there,  
Prying into the darksome rent ;  
Nor can it be with good intent :  
So thinks that Dame of haughty air,  
Who hath a Page her book to hold,  
And wears a frontlet edged with gold.  
Harsh thoughts with her high mood agree—  
Who counts among her ancestry  
Earl Pembroke, slain so impiously !

That slender Youth, a scholar pale,  
From Oxford come to his native vale,  
He also hath his own conceit :  
It is, thinks he, the gracious Fairy,  
Who loved the Shepherd-lord to meet  
In his wanderings solitary :  
Wild notes she in his hearing sang,  
A song of Nature's hidden powers ;  
That whistled like the wind, and rang  
Among the rocks and holly bowers.  
'Twas said that She all shapes could wear ;  
And oftentimes before him stood,  
Amid the trees of some thick wood,  
In semblance of a lady fair ;  
And taught him signs, and showed him sights,  
In Craven's dens, on Cumbrian heights ;  
When under cloud of fear he lay,  
A shepherd clad in homely grey ;  
Nor left him at his later day.

And hence, when he, with spear and shield,  
 Rode full of years to Flodden-field,  
 His eye could see the hidden spring,  
 And how the current was to flow ;  
 The fatal end of Scotland's King,  
 And all that hopeless overthrow.  
 But not in wars did he delight,  
*This* Clifford wished for worthier might ;  
 Nor in broad pomp, or courtly state ;  
 Him his own thoughts did elevate,—  
 Most happy in the shy recess  
 Of Barden's lowly quietness.  
 And choice of studious friends had he  
 Of Bolton's dear fraternity ;  
 Who, standing on this old church tower,  
 In many a calm propitious hour,  
 Perused, with him, the starry sky ;  
 Or, in their cells, with him did pry  
 For other lore,—by keen desire  
 Urged to close toil with chemic fire ;  
 In quest belike of transmutations  
 Rich as the mine's most bright creations.  
 But they and their good works are fled,  
 And all is now disquieted—  
 And peace is none, for living or dead !

Ah, pensive Scholar, think not so,  
 But look again at the radiant Doe !  
 What quiet watch she seems to keep,  
 Alone, beside that grassy heap !  
 Why mention other thoughts unmeet  
 For vision so composed and sweet ?  
 While stand the people in a ring,  
 Gazing, doubting, questioning ;  
 Yea, many overcome in spite  
 Of recollections clear and bright ;  
 Which yet do unto some impart  
 An undisturbed repose of heart.  
 And all the assembly own a law  
 Of orderly respect and awe ;  
 But see—they vanish one by one,  
 And last, the Doe herself is gone.

Harp ! we have been full long beguiled  
 By vague thoughts, lured by fancies wild ;  
 To which, with no reluctant strings,  
 Thou hast attuned thy murmurings ;

And now before this Pile we stand  
In solitude, and utter peace :  
But, Harp ! thy murmurs may not cease—  
A Spirit, with his angelic wings,  
In soft and breeze-like visitings,  
Has touched thee—and a Spirit's hand :  
A voice is with us—a command  
To chant, in strains of heavenly glory,  
A tale of tears, a mortal story !

CANTO SECOND

THE Harp in lowliness obeyed ;  
And first we sang of the greenwood shade  
And a solitary Maid ;  
Beginning, where the song must end,  
With her, and with her sylvan Friend ;  
The Friend who stood before her sight,  
Her only unextinguished light ;  
Her last companion in a dearth  
Of love, upon a hopeless earth.

For She it was—this Maid, who wrought  
Meekly, with foreboding thought,  
In vermeil colours and in gold  
An unblest work ; which, standing by,  
Her Father did with joy behold,—  
Exulting in its imagery ;  
A Banner, fashioned to fulfil  
Too perfectly his headstrong will ;  
For on this Banner had her hand  
Embroidered (such her Sire's command)  
The sacred Cross ; and figured there  
The five dear wounds our Lord did bear ;  
Full soon to be uplifted high,  
And float in rueful company !

It was the time when England's Queen  
Twelve years had reigned, a Sovereign dread ;  
Nor yet the restless crown had been  
Disturbed upon her virgin head ;  
But now the inly-working North  
Was ripe to send its thousands forth,  
A potent vassalage, to fight  
In Percy's and in Neville's right,  
Two Earls fast leagued in discontent,  
Who gave their wishes open vent ;  
And boldly urged a general plea,

The rites of ancient piety  
 To be triumphantly restored,  
 By the stern justice of the sword !  
 And that same Banner, on whose breast  
 The blameless Lady had exprest  
 Memorials chosen to give life  
 And sunshine to a dangerous strife ;  
 That Banner, waiting for the Call,  
 Stood quietly in Rylstone-hall.

It came ; and Francis Norton said,  
 " O Father ! rise not in this fray—  
 The hairs are white upon your head ;  
 Dear Father, hear me when I say  
 It is for you too late a day !  
 Bethink you of your own good name :  
 A just and gracious Queen have we,  
 A pure religion, and the claim  
 Of peace on our humanity.—  
 'Tis meet that I endure your scorn ;  
 I am your son, your eldest born ;  
 But not for lordship or for land,  
 My Father, do I clasp your knees ;  
 The Banner touch not, stay your hand,  
 This multitude of men disband,  
 And live at home in blameless ease ;  
 For these my brethren's sake, for me ;  
 And, most of all, for Emily ! "

Tumultuous noises filled the hall ;  
 And scarcely could the Father hear  
 That name—pronounced with a dying fall—  
 The name of his only Daughter dear,  
 As on the banner which stood near  
 He glanced a look of holy pride,  
 And his moist eyes were glorified ;  
 Then did he seize the staff, and say :  
 " Thou, Richard, bear'st thy father's name,  
 Keep thou this ensign till the day  
 When I of thee require the same :  
 Thy place be on my better hand ;—  
 And seven as true as thou, I see,  
 Will cleave to this good cause and me."   
 He spake, and eight brave sons straightway  
 All followed him, a gallant band !

Thus, with his sons, when forth he came  
 The sight was hailed with loud acclaim

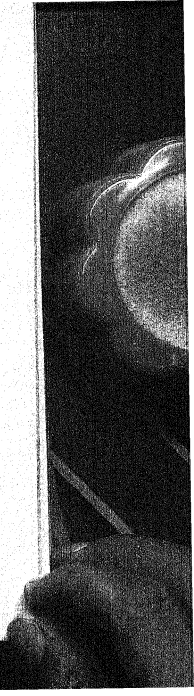
And din of arms and minstrelsy,  
From all his warlike tenantry,  
All horsed and harnessed with him to ride,—  
A voice to which the hills replied !

But Francis, in the vacant hall,  
Stood silent under dreary weight,—  
A phantasm, in which roof and wall  
Shook, tottered, swam before his sight ;  
A phantasm like a dream of night !  
Thus overwhelmed, and desolate,  
He found his way to a postern-gate ;  
And, when he waked, his languid eye  
Was on the calm and silent sky ;  
With air about him breathing sweet,  
And earth's green grass beneath his feet ;  
Nor did he fail ere long to hear  
A sound of military cheer,  
Faint—but it reached that sheltered spot ;  
He heard, and it disturbed him not.

There stood he, leaning on a lance  
Which he had grasped unknowingly,  
Had blindly grasped in that strong trance,  
That dimness of heart-agony ;  
There stood he, cleansed from the despair  
And sorrow of his fruitless prayer,  
The past he calmly hath reviewed :  
But where will be the fortitude  
Of this brave man, when he shall see  
That Form beneath the spreading tree,  
And know that it is Emily ?

He saw her where in open view  
She sate beneath the spreading yew—  
Her head upon her lap, concealing  
In solitude her bitter feeling :  
" Might ever son *command* a sire,  
The act were justified to-day."  
This to himself—and to the Maid,  
Whom now he had approached, he said—  
" Gone are they,—they have their desire ;  
And I with thee one hour will stay,  
To give thee comfort if I may."

She heard, but looked not up, nor spake ;  
And sorrow moved him to partake  
Her silence ; then his thoughts turned round,  
And fervent words a passage found.



"Gone are they, bravely, though misled ;  
 With a dear Father at their head !  
 The Sons obey a natural lord ;  
 The Father had given solemn word  
 To noble Percy ; and a force  
 Still stronger, bends him to his course.  
 This said, our tears to-day may fall  
 As at an innocent funeral.  
 In deep and awful channel runs  
 This sympathy of Sire and Sons ;  
 Untried our Brothers have been loved  
 With heart by simple nature moved ;  
 And now their faithfulness is proved :  
 For faithful we must call them, bearing  
 That soul of conscientious daring.  
 —There were they all in circle—there  
 Stood Richard, Ambrose, Christopher,  
 John with a sword that will not fail,  
 And Marmaduke in fearless mail,  
 And those bright Twins were side by side ;  
 And there, by fresh hopes beautified,  
 Stood He, whose arm yet lacks the power  
 Of man, our youngest, fairest flower !  
 I, by the right of eldest born,  
 And in a second father's place,  
 Presumed to grapple with their scorn,  
 And meet their pity face to face ;  
 Yea, trusting in God's holy aid,  
 I to my Father knelt and prayed ;  
 And one, the pensive Marmaduke,  
 Methought, was yielding inwardly,  
 And would have laid his purpose by,  
 But for a glance of his Father's eye,  
 Which I myself could scarcely brook.

Then be we, each and all, forgiven !  
 Thou, chiefly thou, my Sister dear,  
 Whose pangs are registered in heaven—  
 The stifled sigh, the hidden tear,  
 And smiles, that dared to take their place,  
 Meek filial smiles, upon thy face,  
 As that unhallowed Banner grew  
 Beneath a loving old Man's view.  
 Thy part is done—thy painful part ;  
 Be thou then satisfied in heart !  
 A further, though far easier, task

Than thine hath been, my duties ask ;  
 With theirs my efforts cannot blend,  
 I cannot for such cause contend ;  
 Their aims I utterly forswear ;  
 But I in body will be there.  
 Unarmed and naked will I go,  
 Be at their side, come weal or woe :  
 On kind occasions I may wait,  
 See, hear, obstruct, or mitigate.  
 Bare breast I take and an empty hand."<sup>1</sup>....  
 Therewith he threw away the lance,  
 Which he had grasped in that strong trance,  
 Spurned it, like something that would stand  
 Between him and the pure intent  
 Of love on which his soul was bent.

"For thee, for thee, is left the sense  
 Of trial past without offence  
 To God or man ; such innocence,  
 Such consolation, and the excess  
 Of an unmerited distress ;  
 In that thy very strength must lie.  
 —O Sister, I could prophesy !  
 The time is come that rings the knell  
 Of all we loved, and loved so well :  
 Hope nothing, if I thus may speak  
 To thee, a woman, and thence weak :  
 Hope nothing, I repeat ; for we  
 Are doomed to perish utterly :  
 'Tis meet that thou with me divide  
 The thought while I am by thy side,  
 Acknowledging a grace in this,  
 A comfort in the dark abyss.  
 But look not for me when I am gone,  
 And be no farther wrought upon :  
 Farewell all wishes, all debate,  
 All prayers for this cause, or for that !  
 Weep, if that aid thee ; but depend  
 Upon no help of outward friend ;  
 Espouse thy doom at once, and cleave  
 To fortitude without reprieve.  
 For we must fall, both we and ours—  
 This Mansion and these pleasant bowers,  
 Walks, pools, and arbours, homestead, hall—  
 Our fate is theirs, will reach them all ;

<sup>1</sup> See the old ballad,—“The Rising of the North.”

The young horse must forsake his manger,  
 And learn to glory in a Stranger ;  
 The hawk forget his perch ; the hound  
 Be parted from his ancient ground :  
 The blast will sweep us all away—  
 One desolation, one decay !  
 And even this Creature !” which words saying,  
 He pointed to a lovely Doe,  
 A few steps distant, feeding, straying ;  
 Fair creature, and more white than snow !  
 “ Even she will to her peaceful woods  
 Return, and to her murmuring floods,  
 And be in heart and soul the same  
 She was before she hither came ;  
 Ere she had learned to love us all,  
 Herself beloved in Rylstone-hall.  
 —But thou, my Sister, doomed to be  
 The last leaf on a blasted tree ;  
 If not in vain we breathed the breath  
 Together of a purer faith ;  
 If hand in hand we have been led,  
 And thou, (O happy thought this day :)  
 Not seldom foremost in the way ;  
 If on one thought our minds have fed,  
 And we have in one meaning read ;  
 If, when at home our private weal  
 Hath suffered from the shock of zeal,  
 Together we have learned to prize  
 Forbearance and self-sacrifice ;  
 If we like combatants have fared,  
 And for this issue been prepared ;  
 If thou art beautiful, and youth  
 And thought endue thee with all truth—  
 Be strong ;—be worthy of the grace  
 Of God, and fill thy destined place :  
 A Soul, by force of sorrows high,  
 Uplifted to the purest sky  
 Of undisturbed humanity ! ”

He ended,—or she heard no more ;  
 He led her from the yew-tree shade,  
 And at the mansion's silent door,  
 He kissed the consecrated Maid ;  
 And down the valley then pursued,  
 Alone, the armed Multitude.

CANTO THIRD

Now joy for you who from the towers  
Of Brancepeth look in doubt and fear,  
Telling melancholy hours !  
Proclaim it, let your Masters hear  
That Norton with his band is near !  
The watchmen from their station high  
Pronounced the word,—and the Earls descry,  
Well-pleased, the armed Company  
Marching down the banks of Were.

Said fearless Norton to the pair  
Gone forth to greet him on the plain—  
“This meeting, noble Lords ! looks fair,  
I bring with me a goodly train ;  
Their hearts are with you : hill and dale  
Have helped us : Ure we crossed, and Swale,  
And horse and harness followed—see  
The best part of their Yeomanry !  
—Stand forth, my Sons !—these eight are mine !  
Whom to this service I commend ;  
Which way soe'er our fate incline,  
These will be faithful to the end ;  
They are my all”—voice failed him here—  
“My all save one, a Daughter dear !  
Whom I have left, Love's mildest birth,  
The meekest Child on this blessed earth.  
I had—but these are by my side,  
These Eight, and this is a day of pride !  
The time is ripe. With festive din  
Lo ! how the people are flocking in,—  
Like hungry fowl to the feeder's hand  
When snow lies heavy upon the land.”

He spake bare truth : for far and near  
From every side came noisy swarms  
Of Peasants in their homely gear ;  
And, mixed with these, to Brancepeth came  
Grave Gentry of estate and name,  
And Captains known for worth in arms  
And prayed the Earls in self-defence  
To rise, and prove their innocence.—  
“Rise, noble Earls, put forth your might  
For holy Church, and the People's right !”

The Norton fixed, at this demand,  
His eye upon Northumberland,

And said ; "The Minds of Men will own  
 No loyal rest while England's Crown  
 Remains without an Heir, the bait  
 Of strife and factions desperate ;  
 Who, paying deadly hate in kind  
 Through all things else, in this can find  
 A mutual hope, a common mind ;  
 And plot, and pant to overwhelm  
 All ancient honour in the realm.  
 —Brave Earls ! to whose heroic veins  
 Our noblest blood is given in trust,  
 To you a suffering State complains,  
 And ye must raise her from the dust.  
 With wishes of still bolder scope  
 On you we look, with dearest hope ;  
 Even for our Altars—for the prize,  
 In Heaven, of life that never dies ;  
 For the old and holy Church we mourn,  
 And must in joy to her return.  
 Behold !" —and from his Son whose stand  
 Was on his right, from that guardian hand  
 He took the Banner, and unfurled  
 The precious folds—"behold," said he,  
 "The ransom of a sinful world ;  
 Let this your preservation be ;  
 The wounds of hands and feet and side,  
 And the sacred Cross on which Jesus died.  
 —This bring I from an ancient hearth,  
 These Records wrought in pledge of love  
 By hands of no ignoble birth,  
 A Maid o'er whom the blessed Dove  
 Vouchsafed in gentleness to brood  
 While she the holy work pursued."  
 "Uplift the Standard !" was the cry  
 From all the listeners that stood round,  
 "Plant it,—by this we live or die."  
 The Norton ceased not for that sound,  
 But said ; "The prayer which ye have heard,  
 Much-injured Earls ! by these preferred,  
 Is offered to the Saints, the sigh  
 Of tens of thousands, secretly."  
 "Uplift it !" cried once more the Band,  
 And then a thoughtful pause ensued :  
 "Uplift it !" said Northumberland—  
 Whereat, from all the multitude

Who saw the Banner reared on high  
In all its dread emblazonry,  
A voice of uttermost joy brake out:  
The transport was rolled down the river of Were,  
And Durham, the time-honoured Durham, did hear,  
And the towers of Saint Cuthbert were stirred by the shout!

Now was the North in arms:—they shine  
In warlike trim from Tweed to Tyne,  
At Percy's voice: and Neville sees  
His Followers gathering in from Tees,  
From Were, and all the little rills  
Concealed among the forked hills—  
Seven hundred Knights, Retainers all  
Of Neville, at their Master's call  
Had sate together in Raby Hall!  
Such strength that Earldom held of yore;  
Nor wanted at this time rich store  
Of well-appointed chivalry.  
—Not loth the sleepy lance to wield,  
And greet the old paternal shield,  
They heard the summons;—and, furthermore,  
Horsemen and Foot of each degree,  
Unbound by pledge of fealty,  
Appeared, with free and open hate  
Of novelties in Church and State;  
Knight, burgher, yeoman, and esquire;  
And Romish priest, in priest's attire.  
And thus, in arms, a zealous Band  
Proceeding under joint command,  
To Durham first their course they bear;  
And in Saint Cuthbert's ancient seat  
Sang mass,—and tore the book of prayer,—  
And trod the bible beneath their feet.

Thence marching southward smooth and free  
"They mustered their host at Wetherby,  
Full sixteen thousand fair to see,"<sup>1</sup>  
The Choicest Warriors of the North!  
But none for beauty and for worth  
Like those eight Sons—who, in a ring,  
(Ripe men, or blooming in life's spring)  
Each with a lance, erect and tall,  
A falchion, and a buckler small,  
Stood by their Sire, on Clifford-moor,  
To guard the Standard which he bore.

<sup>1</sup> From the old ballad.

On foot they girt their Father round ;  
 And so will keep the appointed ground  
 Where'er their march : no steed will he  
 Henceforth bestride ;—triumphantly,  
 He stands upon the grassy sod,  
 Trusting himself to the earth, and God.  
 Rare sight to embolden and inspire !  
 Proud was the field of Sons and Sire ;  
 Of him the most ; and, sooth to say,  
 No shape of man in all the array  
 So graced the sunshine of that day.  
 The monumental pomp of age  
 Was with this goodly Personage ;  
 A stature undepressed in size,  
 Unbent, which rather seemed to rise,  
 In open victory o'er the weight  
 Of seventy years, to loftier height ;  
 Magnific limbs of withered state ;  
 A face to fear and venerate ;  
 Eyes dark and strong ; and on his head  
 Bright locks of silver hair, thick spread,  
 Which a brown morion half-concealed,  
 Light as a hunter's of the field ;  
 And thus, with girdle round his waist,  
 Whereon the Banner-staff might rest  
 At need, he stood, advancing high  
 The glittering, floating Pageantry.

Who sees him ?—thousands see, and One  
 With unparticipated gaze ;  
 Who, 'mong those thousands, friend hath none,  
 And treads in solitary ways.  
 He, following wheresoe'er he might,  
 Hath watched the Banner from afar,  
 As shepherds watch a lonely star,  
 Or mariners the distant light  
 That guides them through a stormy night.  
 And now, upon a chosen plot  
 Of rising ground, yon heathy spot !  
 He takes alone his far-off stand,  
 With breast unmailed, unweaponed hand.  
 Bold is his aspect ; but his eye  
 Is pregnant with anxiety,  
 While, like a tutelary Power,  
 He there stands fixed from hour to hour :  
 Yet sometimes in more humble guise,

Upon the turf-clad height he lies  
 Stretched, herdsman-like, as if to bask  
 In sunshine were his only task,  
 Or by his mantle's help to find  
 A shelter from the nipping wind :  
 And thus, with short oblivion blest,  
 His weary spirits gather rest.  
 Again he lifts his eyes ; and lo !  
 The pageant glancing to and fro ;  
 And hope is awakened by the sight,  
 He thence may learn, ere fall of night,  
 Which way the tide is doomed to flow.

To London were the Chieftains bent ;  
 But what avails the bold intent ?  
 A Royal army is gone forth  
 To quell the RISING OF THE NORTH ;  
 They march with Dudley at their head,  
 And, in seven days' space, will to York be led !—  
 Can such a mighty Host be raised  
 Thus suddenly, and brought so near ?  
 The Earls upon each other gazed,  
 And Neville's cheek grew pale with fear ;  
 For, with a high and valiant name,  
 He bore a heart of timid frame ;  
 And bold if both had been, yet they  
 " Against so many may not stay." <sup>1</sup>  
 Back therefore will they hie to seize  
 A strong Hold on the banks of Tees ;  
 There wait a favourable hour,  
 Until Lord Dacre with his power  
 From Naworth come ; and Howard's aid  
 Be with them openly displayed.

While through the Host, from man to man,  
 A rumour of this purpose ran,  
 The Standard trusting to the care  
 Of him who heretofore did bear  
 That charge, impatient Norton sought  
 The Chieftains to unfold his thought,  
 And thus abruptly spake ;—" We yield  
 (And can it be ?) an unfought field !—  
 How oft has strength, the strength of heaven,  
 To few triumphantly been given !  
 Still do our very children boast  
 Of mitred Thurston—what a Host

<sup>1</sup> From the old ballad.

He conquered!—Saw we not the Plain  
 (And flying shall behold again)  
 Where faith was proved?—while to battle moved  
 The Standard, on the Sacred Wain  
 That bore it, compassed round by a bold  
 Fraternity of Barons old;  
 And with those grey-haired champions stood,  
 Under the saintly ensigns three,  
 The infant Heir of Mowbray's blood—  
 All confident of victory!—  
 Shall Percy blush, then, for his name?  
 Must Westmoreland be asked with shame  
 Whose were the numbers, where the loss,  
 In that other day of Neville's Cross?  
 When the Prior of Durham with holy hand  
 Raised, as the Vision gave command,  
 Saint Cuthbert's Relic—far and near  
 Kenned on the point of a lofty spear;  
 While the Monks prayed in Maiden's Bower  
 To God descending in his power.  
 Less would not at our need be due  
 To us, who war against the Untrue;—  
 The delegates of Heaven we rise,  
 Convoked the impious to chastise:  
 We, we, the sanctities of old  
 Would re-establish and uphold:  
 Be warned"—His zeal the Chiefs confounded,  
 But word was given, and the trumpet sounded:  
 Back through the melancholy Host  
 Went Norton, and resumed his post.  
 Alas! thought he, and have I borne  
 This Banner raised with joyful pride,  
 This hope of all posterity,  
 By those dread symbols sanctified;  
 Thus to become at once the scorn  
 Of babbling winds as they go by,  
 A spot of shame to the sun's bright eye,  
 To the light clouds a mockery!  
 —"Even these poor eight of mine would stem—"  
 Half to himself, and half to them  
 He spake—"would stem, or quell, a force  
 Ten times their number, man and horse:  
 This by their own unaided might,  
 Without their father in their sight,  
 Without the Cause for which they fight;

## The White Doe of Rylstone 209

A Cause, which on a needful day  
Would breed us thousands brave as they."  
—So speaking, he his reverend head  
Raised towards that Imagery once more :  
But the familiar prospect shed  
Despondency unfelt before :  
A shock of intimations vain,  
Dismay, and superstitious pain,  
Fell on him, with the sudden thought  
Of her by whom the work was wrought :—  
Oh wherefore was her countenance bright  
With love divine and gentle light ?  
She would not, could not, disobey,  
But her Faith leaned another way.  
Ill tears she wept ; I saw them fall,  
I overheard her as she spake  
Sad words to that mute Animal,  
The White Doe, in the hawthorn brake ;  
She steeped, but not for Jesu's sake,  
This Cross in tears : by her, and One  
Unworthier far we are undone—  
Her recreant Brother—he prevailed  
Over that tender Spirit—assailed  
Too oft, alas ! by her whose head  
In the cold grave hath long been laid :  
She first, in reason's dawn beguiled  
Her docile, unsuspecting Child :  
Far back—far back my mind must go  
To reach the well-spring of this woe !

While thus he brooded, music sweet  
Of border tunes was played to cheer  
The footsteps of a quick retreat ;  
But Norton lingered in the rear,  
Stung with sharp thoughts ; and ere the last  
From his distracted brain was cast,  
Before his Father, Francis stood,  
And spake in firm and earnest mood.

"Though here I bend a suppliant knee  
In reverence, and unarmed, I bear  
In your indignant thoughts my share ;  
Am grieved this backward march to see  
So careless and disorderly.  
I scorn your Chiefs—men who would lead,  
And yet want courage at their need :  
Then look at them with open eyes !

Deserve they further sacrifice?—  
 If—when they shrink, nor dare oppose  
 In open field their gathering foes,  
 (And fast, from this decisive day,  
 Yon multitude must melt away ;)  
 If now I ask a grace not claimed  
 While ground was left for hope ; unblamed  
 Be an endeavour that can do  
 No injury to them or you.  
 My Father ! I would help to find  
 A place of shelter, till the rage  
 Of cruel men do like the wind  
 Exhaust itself and sink to rest ;  
 Be Brother now to Brother joined !  
 Admit me in the equipage  
 Of your misfortunes, that at least,  
 Whatever fate remain behind,  
 I may bear witness in my breast  
 To your nobility of mind !”

“Thou Enemy, my bane and blight !  
 Oh ! bold to fight the Coward's fight  
 Against all good”—but why declare,  
 At length, the issue of a prayer  
 Which love had prompted, yielding scope  
 Too free to one bright moment's hope ?  
 Suffice it that the Son, who strove  
 With fruitless effort to allay  
 That passion, prudently gave way ;  
 Nor did he turn aside to prove  
 His Brothers' wisdom or their love—  
 But calmly from the spot withdrew ;  
 His best endeavours to renew,  
 Should e'er a kindlier time ensue.

## CANTO FOURTH

’Tis night : in silence looking down,  
 The Moon, from cloudless ether, sees  
 A Camp, and a beleaguered Town,  
 And Castle, like a stately crown  
 On the steep rocks of winding Tees ;—  
 And southward far, with moor between,  
 Hill-top, and flood, and forest green,  
 The bright Moon sees that valley small  
 Where Rylstone's old sequestered Hall  
 A venerable image yields

Of quiet to the neighbouring fields ;  
 While from one pillared chimney breathes  
 The smoke, and mounts in silver wreaths.  
 —The courts are hushed ;—for timely sleep  
 The greyhounds to their kennel creep ;  
 The peacock in the broad ash tree  
 Aloft is roosted for the night,  
 He who in proud prosperity  
 Of colours manifold and bright  
 Walked round, affronting the daylight ;  
 And higher still, above the bower  
 Where he is perched, from yon lone Tower  
 The hall-clock in the clear moonshine  
 With glittering finger points at nine.

Ah ! who could think that sadness here  
 Hath any sway ? or pain, or fear ?  
 A soft and lulling sound is heard  
 Of streams inaudible by day ;  
 The garden pool's dark surface, stirred  
 By the night insects in their play,  
 Breaks into dimples small and bright ;  
 A thousand, thousand rings of light  
 That shape themselves and disappear  
 Almost as soon as seen :—and lo !  
 Not distant far, the milk-white Doe—  
 The same who quietly was feeding  
 On the green herb, and nothing heeding,  
 When Francis, uttering to the Maid  
 His last words in the yew-tree shade,  
 Involved whate'er by love was brought  
 Out of his heart, or crossed his thought,  
 Or chance presented to his eye,  
 In one sad sweep of destiny—  
 The same fair Creature, who hath found  
 Her way into forbidden ground ;  
 Where now—within this spacious plot  
 For pleasure made, a goodly spot,  
 With lawns and beds of flowers, and shades  
 Of trellis-work in long arcades,  
 And cirque and crescent framed by wall  
 Of close-clipt foliage green and tall,  
 Converging walks, and fountains gay,  
 And terraces in trim array—  
 Beneath yon cypress spiring high,  
 With pine and cedar spreading wide

Their darksome boughs on either side,  
 In open moonlight doth she lie ;  
 Happy as others of her kind,  
 That, far from human neighbourhood,  
 Range unrestricted as the wind,  
 Through park, or chase, or savage wood.

But see the consecrated Maid  
 Emerging from a cedar shade  
 To open moonshine, where the Doe  
 Beneath the cypress-spire is laid ;  
 Like a patch of April snow—  
 Upon a bed of herbage green,  
 Lingerin in a woody glade  
 Or behind a rocky screen—  
 Lonely relic ! which, if seen  
 By the shepherd, is passed by  
 With an inattentive eye.  
 Nor more regard doth She bestow  
 Upon the uncomplaining Doe  
 Now couched at ease, though oft this day  
 Not unperplexed nor free from pain,  
 When she had tried, and tried in vain,  
 Approaching in her gentle way,  
 To win some look of love, or gain  
 Encouragement to sport or play ;  
 Attempts which still the heart-sick Maid  
 Rejected, or with slight repaid.

Yet Emily is soothed ;—the breeze  
 Came fraught with kindly sympathies.  
 As she approached yon rustic Shed  
 Hung with late-flowering woodbine, spread  
 Along the walls and overhead,  
 The fragrance of the breathing flowers  
 Revived a memory of those hours  
 When here, in this remote alcove,  
 (While from the pendent woodbine came  
 Like odours, sweet as if the same)  
 A fondly-anxious Mother strove  
 To teach her salutary fears  
 And mysteries above her years.  
 Yes, she is soothed : an Image faint,  
 And yet not faint—a presence bright  
 Returns to her—that blessed Saint  
 Who with mild looks and language mild  
 Instructed here her darling Child,

## The White Doe of Rylstone 213

While yet a prattler on the knee,  
To worship in simplicity  
The invisible God, and take for guide  
The faith reformed and purified.

'Tis flown—the Vision, and the sense  
Of that beguiling influence,  
“But oh! thou Angel from above,  
Mute Spirit of maternal love,  
That stood'st before my eyes, more clear  
Than ghosts are fabled to appear  
Sent upon embassies of fear;  
As thou thy presence hast to me  
Vouchsafed, in radiant ministry  
Descend on Francis; nor forbear  
To greet him with a voice, and say;—  
‘If hope be a rejected stay,  
Do thou, my christian Son, beware  
Of that most lamentable snare,  
The self-reliance of despair!’”

Then from within the embowered retreat  
Where she had found a grateful seat  
Perturbed she issues. She will go!  
Herself will follow to the war,  
And clasp her Father's knees;—ah, no!  
She meets the insuperable bar,  
The injunction by her Brother laid;  
His parting charge—but ill obeyed—  
That interdicted all debate,  
All prayer for this cause or for that;  
All efforts that would turn aside  
The headstrong current of their fate:  
*Her duty is to stand and wait;*  
In resignation to abide  
The shock, AND FINALLY SECURE  
O'er PAIN AND GRIEF A TRIUMPH PURE.  
—She feels it, and her pangs are checked.  
But now, as silently she paced  
The turf, and thought by thought was chased,  
Came One who, with sedate respect,  
Approached, and, greeting her, thus spake;  
“An old man's privilege I take:  
Dark is the time—a woeful day!  
Dear daughter of affliction, say  
How can I serve you? point the way.”  
“Rights have you, and may well be bold;

You with my Father have grown old  
 In friendship—strive—for his sake go—  
 Turn from us all the coming woe :  
 This would I beg ; but on my mind  
 A passive stillness is enjoined.  
 On you, if room for mortal aid  
 Be left, is no restriction laid ;  
 You not forbidden to recline  
 With hope upon the Will divine."

"Hope," said the old Man, "must abide  
 With all of us, whate'er betide.  
 In Craven's Wilds is many a den,  
 To shelter persecuted men :  
 Far under ground is many a cave,  
 Where they might lie as in the grave,  
 Until this storm hath ceased to rave :  
 Or let them cross the River Tweed,  
 And be at once from peril freed !"

"Ah tempt me not !" she faintly sighed ;  
 "I will not counsel nor exhort,  
 With my condition satisfied ;  
 But you, at least, may make report  
 Of what befalls ;—be this your task—  
 This may be done ;—'tis all I ask !"

She spake—and from the Lady's sight  
 The Sire, unconscious of his age,  
 Departed promptly as a Page  
 Bound on some errand of delight.  
 —The noble Francis—wise as brave,  
 Thought he, may want not skill to save.  
 With hopes in tenderness concealed,  
 Unarmed he followed to the field ;  
 Him will I seek : the insurgent Powers  
 Are now besieging Barnard's Towers,—  
 "Grant that the Moon which shines this night  
 May guide them in a prudent flight !"

But quick the turns of chance and change,  
 And knowledge has a narrow range ;  
 Whence idle fears, and needless pain,  
 And wishes blind, and efforts vain.—  
 The Moon may shine, but cannot be  
 Their guide in flight—already she  
 Hath witnessed their captivity.  
 She saw the desperate assault  
 Upon that hostile castle made ;—

But dark and dismal is the vault  
Where Norton and his sons are laid !  
Disastrous issue !—he had said  
“This night yon faithless Towers must yield,  
Or we for ever quit the field.  
—Neville is utterly dismayed,  
For promise fails of Howard's aid ;  
And Dacre to our call replies  
That ~~he~~ is unprepared to rise.  
My heart is sick ;—this weary pause  
Must needs be fatal to our cause.  
The breach is open—on the wall,  
This night, the Banner shall be planted !”  
—“Twas done : his Sons were with him—all ;  
They belt him round with hearts undaunted  
And others follow ;—Sire and Son  
Leap down into the court ;—“Tis won”—  
They shout aloud—but Heaven decreed  
That with their joyful shout should close  
The triumph of a desperate deed  
Which struck with terror friends and foes !  
The friend shrinks back—the foe recoils  
From Norton and his filial band ;  
But they, now caught within the toils,  
Against a thousand cannot stand ;—  
The foe from numbers courage drew,  
And overpowered that gallant few.  
“A rescue for the Standard !” cried  
The Father from within the walls ;  
But, see, the sacred Standard falls !—  
Confusion through the Camp spread wide :  
Some fled ; and some their fears detained :  
But ere the Moon had sunk to rest  
In her pale chambers of the west,  
Of that rash levy nought remained.

CANTO FIFTH

HIGH on a point of rugged ground  
Among the wastes of Rylstone Fell,  
Above the loftiest ridge or mound  
Where foresters or shepherds dwell,  
An edifice of warlike frame  
Stands single—Norton Tower its name—  
It fronts all quarters, and looks round  
O'er path and road, and plain and dell,

Dark moor, and gleam of pool and stream,  
Upon a prospect without bound.

The summit of this bold ascent—  
Though bleak and bare, and seldom free  
As Pendle-hill or Pennygent  
From wind, or frost, or vapours wet—  
Had often heard the sound of glee  
When there the youthful Nortons met,  
To practise games and archery :  
How proud and happy they ! the crowd  
Of Lookers-on how pleased and proud !  
And from the scorching noon-tide sun,  
From showers, or when the prize was won,  
They to the Tower withdrew, and there  
Would mirth run round, with generous fare ;  
And the stern old Lord of Rylstone-hall  
Was happiest, proudest, of them all !

But now, his Child, with anguish pale,  
Upon the height walks to and fro ;  
'Tis well that she hath heard the tale,  
Received the bitterness of woe :  
For she *had* hoped, had hoped and feared,  
Such rights did feeble nature claim ;  
And oft her steps had hither steered,  
Though not unconscious of self-blame ;  
For she her brother's charge revered,  
His farewell words ; and by the same,  
Yea by her brother's very name,  
Had, in her solitude, been cheered.

Beside the lonely watch-tower stood  
That grey-haired Man of gentle blood,  
Who with her Father had grown old  
In friendship ; rival hunters they,  
And fellow warriors in their day ;  
To Rylstone he the tidings brought ;  
Then on this height the Maid had sought,  
And, gently as he could, had told  
The end of that dire Tragedy,  
Which it had been his lot to see.

To him the Lady turned ; " You said  
That Francis lives, *he* is not dead ? "  
" Your noble brother hath been spared ;  
To take his life they have not dared ;  
On him and on his high endeavour  
The light of praise shall shine for ever !

Nor did he (such Heaven's will) in vain  
His solitary course maintain;  
Not vainly struggled in the might  
Of duty, seeing with clear sight;  
He was their comfort to the last,  
Their joy till every pang was past.

I witnessed when to York they came—  
What, Lady, if their feet were tied;  
They might deserve a good Man's blame;  
But marks of infamy and shame—  
These were their triumph, these their pride.  
Nor wanted 'mid the pressing crowd  
Deep feeling, that found utterance loud,  
'Lo, Francis comes,' there were who cried,  
'A Prisoner once, but now set free!  
'Tis well, for he the worst defied  
Through force of natural piety;  
He rose not in this quarrel; he,  
For concord's sake and England's good,  
Suit to his Brothers often made  
With tears, and of his Father prayed—  
And when he had in vain withstood  
Their purpose—then did he divide,  
He parted from them; but at their side  
Now walks in unanimity.  
Then peace to cruelty and scorn,  
While to the prison they are borne,  
Peace, peace to all indignity!

And so in Prison were they laid—  
Oh hear me, hear me, gentle Maid,  
For I am come with power to bless,  
By scattering gleams, through your distress,  
Of a redeeming happiness.  
Me did a reverent pity move  
And privilege of ancient love;  
And, in your service, making bold,  
Entrance I gained to that stronghold.

Your Father gave me cordial greeting;  
But to his purposes, that burned  
Within him, instantly returned:  
He was commanding and entreating,  
And said—'We need not stop, my Son!  
Thoughts press, and time is hurrying on'—  
And so to Francis he renewed  
His words, more calmly thus pursued.

'Might this our enterprise have sped,  
 Change wide and deep the Land had seen,  
 A renovation from the dead,  
 A spring-tide of immortal green :  
 The darksome altars would have blazed  
 Like stars when clouds are rolled away ;  
 Salvation to all eyes that gazed,  
 Once more the Rood had been upraised  
 To spread its arms, and stand for aye.  
 Then, then—had I survived to see  
 New life in Bolton Priory ;  
 The voice restored, the eye of Truth  
 Re-opened that inspired my youth ;  
 To see her in her pomp arrayed—  
 This Banner (for such vow I made)  
 Should on the consecrated breast  
 Of that same Temple have found rest :  
 I would myself have hung it high,  
 Fit offering of glad victory !

A shadow of such thought remains  
 To cheer this sad and pensive time ;  
 A solemn fancy yet sustains  
 One feeble Being—bids me climb  
 Even to the last—one effort more  
 To attest my Faith, if not restore.

Hear then,' said he, 'while I impart,  
 My Son, the last wish of my heart.  
 The Banner strive thou to regain ;  
 And, if the endeavour prove not vain,  
 Bear it—to whom if not to thee  
 Shall I this lonely thought consign ?—  
 Bear it to Bolton Priory,  
 And lay it on Saint Mary's shrine ;  
 To wither in the sun and breeze  
 'Mid those decaying sanctities.  
 There let at least the gift be laid,  
 The testimony there displayed ;  
 Bold proof that with no selfish aim,  
 But for lost Faith and Christ's dear name,  
 I helmeted a brow though white,  
 And took a place in all men's sight ;  
 Yea offered up this noble Brood,  
 This fair unrivalled Brotherhood,  
 And turned away from thee, my Son !  
 And left—but be the rest unsaid,

The name untouched, the tear unshed ;—  
My wish is known, and I have done :  
Now promise, grant this one request,  
This dying prayer, and be thou blest !'

Then Francis answered—' Trust thy Son,  
For, with God's will, it shall be done !'—

The pledge obtained, the solemn word  
Thus scarcely given, a noise was heard,  
And Officers appeared in state  
To lead the prisoners to their fate.  
They rose, oh ! wherefore should I fear  
To tell, or, Lady, you to hear ?  
They rose—embraces none were given—  
They stood like trees when earth and heaven  
Are calm ; they knew each other's worth,  
And reverently the Band went forth.  
They met, when they had reached the door,  
One with profane and harsh intent  
Placed there—that he might go before,  
And, with that rueful Banner borne  
Aloft in sign of taunting scorn,  
Conduct them to their punishment :  
So cruel Sussex, unrestrained  
By human feeling, had ordained.  
The unhappy Banner Francis saw,  
And, with a look of calm command  
Inspiring universal awe,  
He took it from the soldier's hand ;  
And all the people that stood round  
Confirmed the deed in peace profound.  
—High transport did the Father shed  
Upon his Son—and they were led,  
Led on, and yielded up their breath ;  
Together died, a happy death !—  
But Francis, soon as he had braved  
That insult, and the Banner saved,  
Athwart the unresisting tide  
Of the spectators occupied  
In admiration or dismay,  
Bore instantly his Charge away."

These things, which thus had in the sight  
And hearing passed of Him who stood  
With Emily, on the Watch-tower height,  
In Rylstone's woeful neighbourhood,  
He told ; and oftentimes with voice



Of power to comfort or rejoice ;  
 For deepest sorrows that aspire,  
 Go high, no transport ever higher.  
 "Yes—God is rich in mercy," said  
 The old Man to the silent Maid,  
 "Yet, Lady ! shines, through this black night,  
 One star of aspect heavenly bright ;  
 Your Brother lives—he lives—is come  
 Perhaps already to his home ;  
 Then let us leave this dreary place."  
 She yielded, and with gentle pace,  
 Though without one uplifted look,  
 To Rylstone-hall her way she took.

## CANTO SIXTH

WHY comes not Francis ?—From the doleful City  
 He fled,—and, in his flight, could hear  
 The death-sounds of the Minster-bell :  
 That sullen stroke pronounced farewell  
 To Marmaduke, cut off from pity !  
 To Ambrose that ! and then a knell  
 For him, the sweet half-opened Flower !  
 For all—all dying in one hour !  
 —Why comes not Francis ? Thoughts of love  
 Should bear him to his Sister dear  
 With the fleet motion of a dove ;  
 Yea, like a heavenly messenger  
 Of speediest wing, should he appear.  
 Why comes he not ?—for westward fast  
 Along the plain of York he past ;  
 Reckless of what impels or leads,  
 Unchecked he hurries on ;—nor heeds  
 The sorrow, through the Villages,  
 Spread by triumphant cruelties  
 Of vengeful military force,  
 And punishment without remorse.  
 He marked not, heard not, as he fled ;  
 All but the suffering heart was dead  
 For him, abandoned to blank awe,  
 To vacancy, and horror strong :  
 And the first object which he saw,  
 With conscious sight, as he swept along—  
 It was the Banner in his hand !  
 He felt—and made a sudden stand.  
 He looked about like one betrayed :

What hath he done? what promise made?  
 Oh weak, weak moment! to what end  
 Can such a vain oblation tend,  
 And he the Bearer?—Can he go  
 Carrying this instrument of woe,  
 And find, find anywhere, a right  
 To excuse him in his Country's sight?  
 No; will not all men deem the change  
 A downward course, perverse and stranger?  
 Here is it;—but how? when? must she,  
 The unoffending Emily,  
 Again this piteous object see?

Such conflict long did he maintain,  
 Nor liberty nor rest could gain:  
 His own life into danger brought  
 By this sad burden—even that thought,  
 Exciting self-suspicion strong,  
 Swayed the brave man to his wrong,  
 And how—unless it were the sense  
 Of all-disposing Providence,  
 Its will unquestionably shown—  
 How has the Banner clung so fast  
 To a palsied, and unconscious hand;  
 Clung to the hand to which it passed  
 Without impediment? And why,  
 But that Heaven's purpose might be known,  
 Doth now no hindrance meet his eye,  
 No intervention, to withstand  
 Fulfilment of a Father's prayer  
 Breathed to a Son forgiven, and blest  
 When all resentments were at rest,  
 And life in death laid the heart bare?—  
 Then, like a spectre sweeping by,  
 Rushed through his mind the prophecy  
 Of utter desolation made  
 To Emily in the yew-tree shade:  
 He sighed, submitting will and power  
 To the stern embrace of that grasping hour.  
 "No choice is left, the deed is mine—  
 Dead are they, dead!—and I will go,  
 And, for their sakes, come weal or woe,  
 Will lay the Relic on the shrine."

So forward with a steady will  
 He went, and traversed plain and hill;  
 And up the vale of Wharfe his way

Pursued ;—and, at the dawn of day,  
 Attained a summit whence his eyes  
 Could see the Tower of Bolton rise.  
 There Francis for a moment's space  
 Made halt—but hark ! a noise behind  
 Of horsemen at an eager pace !  
 He heard, and with misgiving mind.  
 —'Tis Sir George Bowes who leads the Band ;  
 They come, by cruel Sussex sent ;  
 Who, when the Nortons from the hand  
 Of death had drunk their punishment,  
 Bethought him, angry and ashamed,  
 How Francis, with the Banner claimed  
 As his own charge, had disappeared,  
 By all the standers-by revered.  
 His whole bold carriage (which had quelled  
 Thus far the Opposer, and repelled  
 All censure, enterprise so bright  
 That even bad men had vainly striven  
 Against that overcoming light)  
 Was then reviewed, and prompt word given  
 That to what place soever fled  
 He should be seized, alive or dead.

The troop of horse have gained the height  
 Where Francis stood in open sight.  
 They hem him round—"Behold the proof,"  
 They cried, "the Ensign in his hand !  
*He* did not arm, he walked aloof !  
 For why ?—to save his Father's land ;—  
 Worst Traitor of them all is he,  
 A Traitor dark and cowardly !"

"I am no Traitor," Francis said,  
 "Though this unhappy freight I bear ;  
 And must not part with. But beware ;—  
 Err not by hasty zeal misled,  
 Nor do a suffering Spirit wrong,  
 Whose self-reproaches are too strong !"  
 At this he from the beaten road  
 Retreated towards a brake of thorn,  
 That like a place of vantage showed ;  
 And there stood bravely, though forlorn.  
 In self-defence with warlike brow  
 He stood,—nor weaponless was now ;  
 He from a Soldier's hand had snatched  
 A spear,—and, so protected, watched

The Assailants, turning round and round ;  
 But from behind with treacherous wound  
 A Spearman brought him to the ground.  
 The guardian lance, as Francis fell,  
 Dropped from him ; but his other hand  
 The Banner clenched ; till, from out the Band,  
 One, the most eager for the prize,  
 Rushed in ; and—while, O grief to tell !  
 A glimmering sense still left, with eyes  
 Unclosed the noble Francis lay—  
 Seized it, as hunters seize their prey ;  
 But not before the warm life-blood  
 Had tinged more deeply, as it flowed,  
 The wounds the brodered Banner showed,  
 Thy fatal work, O Maiden, innocent as good !

Proudly the Horsemen bore away  
 The Standard ; and where Francis lay  
 There was he left alone, unwept,  
 And for two days unnoticed slept.  
 For at that time bewildering fear  
 Possessed the country, far and near ;  
 But, on the third day, passing by  
 One of the Norton Tenantry  
 Espied the uncovered Corse ; the Man  
 Shrunk as he recognised the face,  
 And to the nearest homesteads ran  
 And called the people to the place.  
 —How desolate is Rylstone-hall !  
 This was the instant thought of all ;  
 And if the lonely Lady there  
 Should be ; to her they cannot bear  
 This weight of anguish and despair.  
 So, when upon sad thoughts had prest  
 Thoughts sadder still, they deemed it best  
 That, if the Priest should yield assent  
 And no one hinder their intent,  
 Then, they, for Christian pity's sake,  
 In holy ground a grave would make ;  
 And straightway buried he should be  
 In the Churchyard of the Priory.

Apart, some little space, was made  
 The grave where Francis must be laid.  
 In no confusion or neglect  
 This did they,—but in pure respect  
 That he was born of gentle blood ;

And that there was no neighbourhood  
Of kindred for him in that ground :  
So to the Churchyard they are bound,  
Bearing the body on a bier ;  
And psalms they sing—a holy sound  
That hill and vale with sadness hear.

But Emily hath raised her head,  
And is again disquieted ;  
She must behold !—so many gone,  
Where is the solitary One ?  
And forth from Rylstone-hall stepped she,—  
To seek her Brother forth she went,  
And tremblingly her course she bent  
Toward Bolton's ruined Priory.  
She comes, and in the vale hath heard  
The funeral dirge ;—she sees the knot  
Of people, sees them in one spot—  
And darting like a wounded bird  
She reached the grave, and with her breast  
Upon the ground received the rest,—  
The consummation, the whole ruth  
And sorrow of this final truth !

## CANTO SEVENTH

" Powers there are  
That touch each other to the quick—in modes  
Which the gross world no sense hath to perceive,  
No soul to dream of."

THOU Spirit, whose angelic hand  
Was to the harp a strong command,  
Called the submissive strings to wake  
In glory for this Maiden's sake,  
Say, Spirit ! whither hath she fled  
To hide her poor afflicted head ?  
What mighty forest in its gloom  
Enfolds her?—is a rifted tomb  
Within the wilderness her seat ?  
Some island which the wild waves beat—  
Is that the Sufferer's last retreat ?  
Or some aspiring rock, that shrouds  
Its perilous front in mists and clouds ?  
High-climbing rock, low sunless dale,  
Sea, desert, what do these avail ?  
Oh take her anguish and her fears  
Into a deep recess of years !

'Tis done ;—despoil and desolation  
 O'er Rylstone's fair domain have blown ;  
 Pools, terraces, and walks are sown  
 With weeds ; the bowers are overthrown,  
 Or have given way to slow mutation,  
 While, in their ancient habitation  
 The Norton name hath been unknown.  
 The lordly Mansion of its pride  
 Is stripped ; the ravage hath spread wide  
 Through park and field, a perishing  
 That mocks the gladness of the Spring !  
 And, with this silent gloom agreeing,  
 Appears a joyless human Being,  
 Of aspect such as if the waste  
 Were under her dominion placed.  
 Upon a primrose bank, her throne  
 Of quietness, she sits alone ;  
 Among the ruins of a wood,  
 Erewhile a covert bright and green,  
 And where full many a brave tree stood,  
 That used to spread its boughs, and ring  
 With the sweet bird's carolling.  
 Behold her, like a virgin Queen,  
 Neglecting in imperial state  
 These outward images of fate,  
 And carrying inward a serene  
 And perfect sway, through many a thought  
 Of chance and change, that hath been brought  
 To the subjection of a holy,  
 Though stern and rigorous, melancholy !  
 The like authority, with grace  
 Of awfulness, is in her face,—  
 There hath she fixed it ; yet it seems  
 To o'ershadow by no native right  
 That face, which cannot lose the gleams,  
 Lose utterly the tender gleams,  
 Of gentleness and meek delight,  
 And loving-kindness ever bright :  
 Such is her sovereign mien :—her dress  
 (A vest with woollen cincture tied,  
 A hood of mountain-wool undyed)  
 Is homely,—fashioned to express  
 A wandering Pilgrim's humbleness.  
 And she *hath* wandered, long and far,  
 Beneath the light of sun and star ;

Hath roamed in trouble and in grief,  
 Driven forward like a withered leaf,  
 Yea like a ship at random blown  
 To distant places and unknown.  
 But now she dares to seek a haven  
 Among her native wilds of Craven ;  
 Hath seen again her Father's roof,  
 And put her fortitude to proof ;  
 The mighty sorrow hath been borne,  
 And she is thoroughly forlorn :  
 Her soul doth in itself stand fast,  
 Sustained by memory of the past  
 And strength of Reason ; held above  
 The infirmities of mortal love ;  
 Undaunted, lofty, calm, and stable,  
 And awfully impenetrable.

And so—beneath a mouldered tree,  
 A self-surviving leafless oak  
 By unregarded age from stroke  
 Of ravage saved—sate Emily.  
 There did she rest, with head reclined,  
 Herself most like a stately flower,  
 (Such have I seen) whom chance of birth  
 Hath separated from its kind,  
 To live and die in a shady bower,  
 Single on the gladsome earth.

When, with a noise like distant thunder,  
 A troop of deer came sweeping by ;  
 And, suddenly, behold a wonder !  
 For One, among those rushing deer,  
 A single One, in mid career  
 Hath stopped, and fixed her large full eye  
 Upon the Lady Emily ;  
 A Doe most beautiful, clear-white,  
 A radiant creature, silver-bright !

Thus checked, a little while it stayed ;  
 A little thoughtful pause it made ;  
 And then advanced with stealth-like pace,  
 Drew softly near her, and more near—  
 Looked round—but saw no cause for fear ;  
 So to her feet the Creature came,  
 And laid its head upon her knee,  
 And looked into the Lady's face,  
 A look of pure benignity,  
 And fond unclouded memory.

It is, thought Emily, the same,  
The very Doe of other years !—  
The pleading look the Lady viewed,  
And, by her gushing thoughts subdued,  
She melted into tears—

A flood of tears, that flowed apace,  
Upon the happy Creature's face.

Oh, moment ever blest ! O Pair  
Beloved of Heaven, Heaven's chosen care,  
This was for you a precious greeting ;  
And may it prove a fruitful meeting !  
Joined are they, and the sylvan Doe  
Can she depart ? can she forego  
The Lady, once her playful peer,  
And now her sainted Mistress dear ?  
And will not Emily receive  
This lovely chronicler of things  
Long past, delights and sorrows ?  
Lone Sufferer ! will not she believe  
The promise in that speaking face ;  
And welcome, as a gift of grace,  
The saddest thought the Creature brings ?

That day, the first of a re-union  
Which was to teem with high communion,  
That day of balmy April weather,  
They tarried in the wood together.  
And when, ere fall of evening dew,  
She from her sylvan haunt withdrew,  
The White Doe tracked with faithful pace  
The Lady to her dwelling-place ;  
That nook where, on paternal ground,  
A habitation she had found,  
The Master of whose humble board  
Once owned her Father for his Lord ;  
A hut, by tufted trees defended,  
Where Rylstone brook with Wharf is blended.

When Emily by morning light  
Went forth, the Doe stood there in sight.  
She shrunk :—with one frail shock of pain  
Received and followed by a prayer,  
She saw the Creature once again ;  
Shun will she not, she feels, will bear ;—  
But, wheresoever she looked round,  
All now was trouble-haunted ground ;  
And therefore now she deems it good

Once more this restless neighbourhood  
 To leave.—Unwooded, yet unforbidden,  
 The White Doe followed up the vale,  
 Up to another cottage, hidden  
 In the deep fork of Amerdale;  
 And there may Emily restore  
 Herself, in spots unseen before.  
 —Why tell of mossy rock, or tree,  
 By lurking Dernbrook's pathless side,  
 Haunts of a strengthening amity  
 That calmed her, cheered, and fortified?  
 For she hath ventured now to read  
 Of time, and place, and thought, and deed—  
 Endless history that lies  
 In her silent Follower's eyes;  
 Who with a power like human reason  
 Discerns the favourable season,  
 Skilled to approach or to retire,—  
 From looks conceiving her desire;  
 From look, deportment, voice, or mien,  
 That vary to the heart within.  
 If she too passionately wreathed  
 Her arms, or over-deeply breathed,  
 Walked quick or slowly, every mood  
 In its degree was understood;  
 Then well may their accord be true,  
 And kindest intercourse ensue.  
 —Oh! surely 'twas a gentle rousing  
 When she by sudden glimpse espied  
 The White Doe on the mountain browsing,  
 Or in the meadow wandered wide!  
 How pleased, when down the Straggler sank  
 Beside her, on some sunny bank!  
 How soothed, when in thick bower enclosed,  
 They, like a nested pair, reposed!  
 Fair Vision! when it crossed the Maid  
 Within some rocky cavern laid,  
 The dark cave's portal gliding by,  
 White as whitest cloud on high  
 Floating through the azure sky.  
 —What now is left for pain or fear?  
 That Presence, dearer and more dear,  
 While they, side by side, were straying,  
 And the shepherd's pipe was playing,  
 Did now a very gladness yield

At morning to the dewy field,  
And with a deeper peace endued  
The hour of moonlight solitude.

With her Companion, in such frame  
Of mind, to Rylstone back she came ;  
And, ranging through the wasted groves,  
Received the memory of old loves,  
Undisturbed and undistrest,  
Into a soul which now was blest  
With a soft spring-day of holy,  
Mild, and grateful, melancholy :  
Not sunless gloom or unenlightened,  
But by tender fancies brightened.

When the bells of Rylstone played  
Their sabbath music—"God us ayde !"   
That was the sound they seemed to speak ;  
Inscriptive legend which I ween  
May on those holy bells be seen,  
That legend and her Grandsire's name ;  
And oftentimes the Lady meek  
Had in her childhood read the same ;  
Words which she slighted at that day ;  
But now, when such sad change was wrought  
And of that lonely name she thought—  
The bells of Rylstone seemed to say,  
While she sate listening in the shade,  
With vocal music, "God us ayde ;"  
And all the hills were glad to bear  
Their part in this effectual prayer.

Nor lacked she Reason's firmest power ;  
But with the White Doe at her side  
Up would she climb to Norton Tower,  
And thence look round her far and wide,  
Her fate there measuring ;—all is stilled,—  
The weak One hath subdued her heart ;  
Behold the prophecy fulfilled,  
Fulfilled, and she sustains her part !  
But here her Brother's words have failed ;  
Here hath a milder doom prevailed ;  
That she, of him and all bereft,  
Hath yet this faithful Partner left ;  
This one Associate, that disproves  
His words, remains for her, and loves.  
If tears are shed, they do not fall  
For loss of him—for one, or all ;

Yet, sometimes, sometimes doth she weep,  
 Moved gently in her soul's soft sleep ;  
 A few tears down her cheek descend  
 For this her last and living Friend.

Bless, tender Hearts, their mutual lot,  
 And bless for both this savage spot ;  
 Which Emily doth sacred hold  
 For reasons dear and manifold—  
 Here hath she, here before her sight,  
 Close to the summit of this height,  
 The grassy rock-encircled Pound  
 In which the Creature first was found.  
 So beautiful the timid Thrall  
 (A spotless Youngling white as foam)  
 Her youngest Brother brought it home ;  
 The youngest, then a lusty boy,  
 Bore it, or led, to Rylstone-hall  
 With heart brimful of pride and joy !

But most to Bolton's sacred Pile,  
 On favouring nights, she loved to go ;  
 There ranged through cloister, court, and aisle,  
 Attended by the soft-paced Doe ;  
 Nor feared she in the still moonshine  
 To look upon Saint Mary's shrine ;  
 Nor on the lonely turf that showed  
 Where Francis slept in his last abode.  
 For that she came ; there oft she sate  
 Forlorn, but not disconsolate :  
 And when she from the abyss returned  
 Of thought, she neither shrunk nor mourned ;  
 Was happy that she lived to greet  
 Her mute Companion as it lay  
 In love and pity at her feet ;  
 How happy in its turn to meet  
 The recognition ! the mild glance  
 Beamed from that gracious countenance ;  
 Communication, like the ray  
 Of a new morning, to the nature  
 And prospects of the inferior Creature !

A mortal Song we sing, by dower  
 Encouraged of celestial power ;  
 Power which the viewless Spirit shed  
 By whom we were first visited ;  
 Whose voice we heard, whose hand and wings  
 Swept like a breeze the conscious strings,

When, left in solitude, erewhile  
 We stood before this ruined Pile,  
 And, quitting unsubstantial dreams,  
 Sang in this Presence kindred themes ;  
 Distress and desolation spread  
 Through human hearts, and pleasure dead,—  
 Dead—but to live again on earth,  
 A second and yet nobler birth ;  
 Dire overthrow, and yet how high  
 The re-ascent in sanctity !  
 From fair to fairer ; day by day  
 A more divine and lofter way !  
 Even such this blessed Pilgrim trod,  
 By sorrow lifted towards her God ;  
 Uplifted to the purest sky  
 Of undisturbed mortality.  
 Her own thoughts loved she ; and could bend  
 A dear look to her lowly Friend ;  
 There stopped ; her thirst was satisfied  
 With what this innocent spring supplied :  
 Her sanction inwardly she bore,  
 And stood apart from human cares :  
 But to the world returned no more,  
 Although with no unwilling mind  
 Help did she give at need, and joined  
 The Wharfedale peasants in their prayers.  
 At length, thus faintly, faintly tied  
 To earth, she was set free, and died.  
 Thy soul, exalted Emily,  
 Maid of the blasted family,  
 Rose to the God from whom it came !  
 —In Rylstone Church her mortal frame  
 Was buried by her Mother's side.

Most glorious sunset ! and a ray  
 Survives—the twilight of this day—  
 In that fair Creature whom the fields  
 Support, and whom the forest shields ;  
 Who, having filled a holy place,  
 Partakes, in her degree, Heaven's grace ;  
 And bears a memory and a mind  
 Raised far above the law of kind ;  
 Haunting the spots with lonely cheer  
 Which her dear Mistress once held dear :  
 Loves most what Emily loved most—  
 The enclosure of this churchyard ground ;

Here wanders like a gliding ghost,  
And every sabbath here is found ;  
Comes with the people when the bells  
Are heard among the moorland dells,  
Finds entrance through yon arch, where way  
Lies open on the sabbath day ;  
Here walks amid the mournful waste  
Of prostrate altars, shrines defaced,  
And floors encumbered with rich show  
Of fret-work imagery laid low ;  
Paces softly, or makes halt,  
By fractured cell, or tomb, or vault ;  
By plate of monumental brass  
Dim-gleaming among weeds and grass,  
And sculptured Forms of Warriors brave :  
But chiefly by that single grave,  
That one sequestered hillock green,  
The pensive visitant is seen.  
There doth the gentle Creature lie  
With those adversities unmoved ;  
Calm spectacle, by earth and sky  
In their benignity approved !  
And aye, methinks, this hoary Pile,  
Subdued by outrage and decay,  
Looks down upon her with a smile,  
A gracious smile, that seems to say—  
" Thou, thou art not a Child of Time,  
But Daughter of the Eternal Prime ! "

## THE PRELUDE

OR, GROWTH OF A POET'S MIND.  
AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL POEM<sup>1</sup>

## BOOK FIRST

## INTRODUCTION—CHILDHOOD AND SCHOOL-TIME

OH there is blessing in this gentle breeze,  
A visitant that while it fans my cheek  
Doth seem half-conscious of the joy it brings  
From the green fields, and from yon azure sky.  
Whate'er its mission, the soft breeze can come  
To none more grateful than to me; escaped  
From the vast city, where I long had pined  
A discontented sojourner: now free,  
Free as a bird to settle where I will.  
What dwelling shall receive me? in what vale  
Shall be my harbour? underneath what grove  
Shall I take up my home? and what clear stream  
Shall with its murmur lull me into rest?  
The earth is all before me. With a heart  
Joyous, nor scared at its own liberty,  
I look about; and should the chosen guide  
Be nothing better than a wandering cloud,  
I cannot miss my way. I breathe again!  
Trances of thought and mountings of the mind  
Come fast upon me: it is shaken off,  
That burthen of my own unnatural self,  
The heavy weight of many a weary day  
Not mine, and such as were not made for me.  
Long months of peace (if such bold word accord  
With any promises of human life),  
Long months of ease and undisturbed delight

<sup>1</sup> Commenced in the beginning of the year 1799, and completed in the Summer of 1805. The Friend, to whom the present Poem is addressed, was the late SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE, who was resident in Malta, for the restoration of his health, when the greater part of it was composed. Mr. Coleridge read a considerable portion of the Poem while he was abroad; and his feelings, on hearing it recited by the Author (after his return to his own country), are recorded in his Verses, addressed to Mr. Wordsworth, which will be found in the *Sibylline Leaves*.—RYDAL MOUNT, July 13th, 1850.

Here wanders like a gliding ghost,  
And every sabbath here is found ;  
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Are mine in prospect ; whither shall I turn,  
By road or pathway, or through trackless field,  
Up hill or down, or shall some floating thing  
Upon the river point me out my course ?

Dear Liberty ! Yet what would it avail  
But for a gift that consecrates the joy ?  
For I, methought, while the sweet breath of heaven  
Was blowing on my body, felt within  
A correspondent breeze, that gently moved  
With quickening virtue, but is now become  
A tempest, a redundant energy,  
Vexing its own creation. Thanks to both,  
And their congenial powers, that, while they join  
In breaking up a long-continued frost,  
Bring with them vernal promises, the hope  
Of active days urged on by flying hours,—  
Days of sweet leisure, taxed with patient thought  
Abstruse, nor wanting punctual service high,  
Matins and vespers of harmonious verse !

Thus far, O Friend ! did I, not used to make  
A present joy the matter of a song,  
Pour forth that day my soul in measured strains  
That would not be forgotten, and are here  
Recorded : to the open fields I told  
A prophecy : poetic numbers came  
Spontaneously to clothe in priestly robe  
A renovated spirit singled out,  
Such hope was mine, for holy services.  
My own voice cheered me, and, far more, the mind's  
Internal echo of the imperfect sound ;  
To both I listened, drawing from them both  
A cheerful confidence in things to come.

Content and not unwilling now to give  
A respite to this passion, I paced on  
With brisk and eager steps ; and came, at length,  
To a green shady place, where down I sate  
Beneath a tree, slackening my thoughts by choice  
And settling into gentler happiness.  
'Twas autumn, and a clear and placid day,  
With warmth, as much as needed, from a sun  
Two hours declined towards the west ; a day  
With silver clouds, and sunshine on the grass,  
And in the sheltered and the sheltering grove

A perfect stillness. Many were the thoughts  
Encouraged and dismissed, till choice was made  
Of a known Vale, whither my feet should turn,  
Nor rest till they had reached the very door  
Of the one cottage which methought I saw,  
No picture of mere memory ever looked  
So fair; and while upon the fancied scene  
I gazed with growing love, a higher power  
Than Fancy gave assurance of some work  
Of glory there forthwith to be begun,  
Perhaps too there performed. Thus long I mused,  
Nor e'er lost sight of what I mused upon,  
Save when, amid the stately grove of oaks,  
Now here, now there, an acorn, from its cup  
Dislodged, through sere leaves rustled, or at once  
To the bare earth dropped with a startling sound.  
From that soft couch I rose not, till the sun  
Had almost touched the horizon; casting then  
A backward glance upon the curling cloud  
Of city smoke, by distance ruralised;  
Keen as a Truant or a Fugitive,  
But as a Pilgrim resolute, I took,  
Even with the chance equipment of that hour,  
The road that pointed toward the chosen Vale.  
It was a splendid evening, and my soul  
Once more made trial of her strength, nor lacked  
Æolian visitations; but the harp  
Was soon defrauded, and the banded host  
Of harmony dispersed in straggling sounds,  
And lastly utter silence! "Be it so;  
Why think of anything but present good?"  
So, like a home-bound labourer, I pursued  
My way beneath the mellowing sun, that shed  
Mild influence; nor left in me one wish  
Again to bend the Sabbath of that time  
To a servile yoke. What need of many words?  
A pleasant loitering journey, through three days  
Continued, brought me to my hermitage.  
I spare to tell of what ensued, the life  
In common things—the endless store of things,  
Rare, or at least so seeming, every day  
Found all about me in one neighbourhood—  
The self-congratulation, and, from morn  
To night, unbroken cheerfulness serene.  
But speedily an earnest longing rose

To brace myself to some determined aim,  
 Reading or thinking ; either to lay up  
 New stores, or rescue from decay the old  
 By timely interference : and therewith  
 Came hopes still higher, that with outward life  
 I might endue some airy phantasies  
 That had been floating loose about for years,  
 And to such beings temperately deal forth  
 The many feelings that oppressed my heart.  
 That hope hath been discouraged ; welcome light  
 Dawns from the east, but dawns to disappear  
 And mock me with a sky that ripens not  
 Into a steady morning : if my mind,  
 Remembering the bold promise of the past,  
 Would gladly grapple with some noble theme,  
 Vain is her wish ; where'er she turns she finds  
 Impediments from day to day renewed.

And now it would content me to yield up  
 Those lofty hopes awhile, for present gifts  
 Of humbler industry. But, oh, dear Friend !  
 The Poet, gentle creature as he is,  
 Hath, like the Lover, his unruly times ;  
 His fits when he is neither sick nor well,  
 Though no distress be near him but his own  
 Unmanageable thoughts : his mind, best pleased  
 While she as duteous as the mother dove  
 Sits brooding, lives not always to that end,  
 But like the innocent bird, hath goadings on  
 That drive her as in trouble through the groves ;  
 With me is now such passion, to be blamed  
 No otherwise than as it lasts too long.

When, as becomes a man who would prepare  
 For such an arduous work, I through myself  
 Make rigorous inquisition, the report  
 Is often cheering ; for I neither seem  
 To lack that first great gift, the vital soul,  
 Nor general Truths, which are themselves a sort  
 Of Elements and Agents, Under-powers,  
 Subordinate helpers of the living mind :  
 Nor am I naked of external things,  
 Forms, images, nor numerous other aids  
 Of less regard, though won perhaps with toil  
 And needful to build up a Poet's praise.  
 Time, place, and manners do I seek, and these

Are found in plenteous store, but nowhere such  
As may be singled out with steady choice ;  
No little band of yet remembered names  
Whom I, in perfect confidence, might hope  
To summon back from lonesome banishment,  
And make them dwellers in the hearts of men  
Now living, or to live in future years.  
Sometimes the ambitious Power of choice, mistaking  
Proud spring-tide swellings for a regular sea,  
Will settle on some British theme, some old  
Romantic tale by Milton left unsung ;  
More often turning to some gentle place  
Within the groves of Chivalry, I pipe  
To shepherd swains, or seated harp in hand,  
Amid reposing knights by a river side  
Or fountain, listen to the grave reports  
Of dire enchantments faced and overcome  
By the strong mind, and tales of warlike feats,  
Where spear encountered spear, and sword with sword  
Fought, as if conscious of the blazonry  
That the shield bore, so glorious was the strife ;  
Whence inspiration for a song that winds  
Through ever-changing scenes of votive quest  
Wrongs to redress, harmonious tribute paid  
To patient courage and unblemished truth,  
To firm devotion, zeal unquenchable,  
And Christian meekness hallowing faithful loves.  
Sometimes, more sternly moved, I would relate  
How vanquished Mithridates northward passed,  
And, hidden in the cloud of years, became  
Odin, the Father of a race by whom  
Perished the Roman Empire : how the friends  
And followers of Sertorius, out of Spain  
Flying, found shelter in the Fortunate Isles,  
And left their usages, their arts and laws,  
To disappear by a slow gradual death,  
To dwindle and to perish one by one,  
Starved in those narrow bounds : but not the soul  
Of Liberty, which fifteen hundred years  
Survived, and, when the European came  
With skill and power that might not be withstood,  
Did, like a pestilence, maintain its hold  
And wasted down by glorious death that race  
Of natural heroes : or I would record  
How, in tyrannic times, some high-souled man,

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Among the chronicles of kings,  
 Silence for Truth's sake : or tell,  
 O Frenchman,<sup>1</sup> through continued force  
 On the inhuman deeds  
 Conquered first the Indian Isles,  
 His ministry across  
 Not to comfort the oppressed,  
 But, like a thirsty wind, to roam about  
 Withering the Oppressor : how Gustavus sought  
 Help at his need in Dalecarlia's mines :  
 How Wallace fought for Scotland ; left the name  
 Of Wallace to be found, like a wild flower,  
 All over his dear Country ; left the deeds  
 Of Wallace, like a family of Ghosts,  
 To people the steep rocks and river banks,  
 Her natural sanctuaries, with a local soul  
 Of independence and stern liberty.  
 Sometimes it suits me better to invent  
 A tale from my own heart, more near akin  
 To my own passions and habitual thoughts ;  
 Some variegated story, in the main  
 Lofty, but the unsubstantial structure melts  
 Before the very sun that brightens it,  
 Mist into air dissolving ! Then a wish,  
 My last and favourite aspiration, mounts  
 With yearning toward some philosophic song  
 Of Truth that cherishes our daily life ;  
 With meditations passionate from deep  
 Recesses in man's heart, immortal verse  
 Thoughtfully fitted to the Orphean lyre ;  
 But from this awful burthen I full soon  
 Take refuge and beguile myself with trust  
 That mellow years will bring a ripen mind  
 And clearer insight. Thus my days are past  
 In contradiction ; with no skill to part  
 Vague longing, haply bred by want of power,  
 From paramount impulse not to be withstood,  
 A timorous capacity, from prudence,  
 From circumspection, infinite delay.  
 Humility and modest awe, themselves  
 Betray me, serving often for a cloak  
 To a more subtle selfishness ; that now  
 Locks every function up in blank reserve,

<sup>1</sup> Dominique de Gourgues, a French gentleman who went in 1568 to Florida to avenge the massacre of the French by the Spaniards there.

Now dupes me, trusting to an anxious eye  
That with intrusive restlessness beats off  
Simplicity and self-presented truth.  
Ah! better far than this, to stray about  
Voluptuously through fields and rural walks,  
And ask no record of the hours, resigned  
To vacant musing, unreprieved neglect  
Of all things, and deliberate holiday.  
Far better never to have heard the name  
Of zeal and just ambition, than to live  
Baffled and plagued by a mind that every hour  
Turns recreant to her task; takes heart again,  
Then feels immediately some hollow thought  
Hang like an interdict upon her hopes.  
This is my lot; for either still I find  
Some imperfection in the chosen theme,  
Or see of absolute accomplishment  
Much wanting, so much wanting, in myself,  
That I recoil and droop, and seek repose  
In listlessness from vain perplexity,  
Unprofitably travelling toward the grave,  
Like a false steward who hath much received  
And renders nothing back.

Was it for this  
That one, the fairest of all rivers, loved  
To blend his murmurs with my nurse's song,  
And, from his alder shades and rocky falls,  
And from his fords and shallows, sent a voice  
That flowed along my dreams? For this, didst thou,  
O Derwent! winding among grassy holms  
Where I was looking on, a babe in arms,  
Make ceaseless music that composed my thoughts  
To more than infant softness, giving me  
Amid the fretful dwellings of mankind  
A foretaste, a dim earnest, of the calm  
That Nature breathes among the hills and groves.

When he had left the mountains and received  
On his smooth breast the shadow of those towers  
That yet survive, a shattered monument  
Of feudal sway, the bright blue river passed  
Along the margin of our terrace walk;  
A tempting playmate whom we dearly loved.  
Oh, many a time have I, a five years' child,  
In a small mill-race severed from his stream,

Made one long bathing of a summer's day ;  
 Basked in the sun, and plunged and basked again  
 Alternate, all a summer's day, or scoured  
 The sandy fields, leaping through flowery groves  
 Of yellow ragwort ; or, when rock and hill,  
 The woods, and distant Skiddaw's lofty height,  
 Were bronzed with deepest radiance, stood alone  
 Beneath the sky, as if I had been born  
 On Indian plains, and from my mother's hut  
 Had run abroad in wantonness, to sport  
 A naked savage, in the thunder shower.

Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up  
 Fostered alike by beauty and by fear :  
 Much favoured in my birth-place, and no less  
 In that beloved Vale to which erelong  
 We were transplanted ;—there were we let loose  
 For sports of wider range. Ere I had told  
 Ten birth-days, when among the mountain slopes  
 Frost, and the breath of frosty wind, had snapped  
 The last autumnal crocus, 'twas my joy  
 With store of springes o'er my shoulder hung  
 To range the open heights where woodcocks run  
 Along the smooth green turf. Through half the night,  
 Scudding away from snare to snare, I plied  
 That anxious visitation ;—moon and stars  
 Were shining o'er my head. I was alone,  
 And seemed to be a trouble to the peace  
 That dwelt among them. Sometimes it befell  
 In these night wanderings, that a strong desire  
 O'erpowered my better reason, and the bird  
 Which was the captive of another's toil  
 Became my prey ; and when the deed was done  
 I heard among the solitary hills  
 Low breathings coming after me, and sounds  
 Of undistinguishable motion, steps  
 Almost as silent as the turf they trod.

Nor less, when spring had warmed the cultured Vale,  
 Moved we as plunderers where the mother-bird  
 Had in high places built her lodge ; though mean  
 Our object and inglorious, yet the end  
 Was not ignoble. Oh ! when I have hung  
 Above the raven's nest, by knots of grass  
 And half-inch fissures in the slippery rock

But ill sustained, and almost (so it seemed)  
Suspended by the blast that blew amain,  
Shouldering the naked crag, oh, at that time  
While on the perilous ridge I hung alone,  
With what strange utterance did the loud dry wind  
Blow through my ear! the sky seemed not a sky  
Of earth—and with what motion moved the clouds!

Dust as we are, the immortal spirit grows  
Like harmony in music; there is a dark  
Inscrutable workmanship that reconciles  
Discordant elements, makes them cling together  
In one society. How strange, that all  
The terrors, pains, and early miseries,  
Regrets, vexations, lassitudes interfused  
Within my mind, should e'er have borne a part,  
And that a needful part, in making up  
The calm existence that is mine when I  
Am worthy of myself! Praise to the end!  
Thanks to the means which Nature deigned to employ;  
Whether her fearless visitings, or those  
That came with soft alarm, like hurtless light  
Opening the peaceful clouds; or she would use  
Severer interventions, ministry  
More palpable, as best might suit her aim.

One summer evening (led by her) I found  
A little boat tied to a willow tree  
Within a rocky cave, its usual home.  
Straight I unloosed her chain, and stepping in  
Pushed from the shore. It was an act of stealth  
And troubled pleasure, nor without the voice  
Of mountain-echoes did my boat move on;  
Leaving behind her still, on either side,  
Small circles glittering idly in the moon,  
Until they melted all into one track  
Of sparkling light. But now, like one who rows,  
Proud of his skill, to reach a chosen point  
With an unswerving line, I fixed my view  
Upon the summit of a craggy ridge,  
The horizon's utmost boundary; far above  
Was nothing but the stars and the grey sky.  
She was an elfin pinnace; lustily  
I dipped my oars into the silent lake,  
And, as I rose upon the stroke, my boat

Went heaving through the water like a swan ;  
When, from behind that craggy steep till then  
The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge,  
As if with voluntary power instinct,  
Upreared its head. I struck and struck again,  
And growing still in stature the grim shape  
Towered up between me and the stars, and still,  
For so it seemed, with purpose of its own  
And measured motion like a living thing,  
Strode after me. With trembling oars I turned,  
And through the silent water stole my way  
Back to the covert of the willow tree ;  
There in her mooring-place I left my bark,—  
And through the meadows homeward went, in grave  
And serious mood ; but after I had seen  
That spectacle, for many days, my brain  
Worked with a dim and undetermined sense  
Of unknown modes of being ; o'er my thoughts  
There hung a darkness, call it solitude  
Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes  
Remained, no pleasant images of trees,  
Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields ;  
But huge and mighty forms, that do not live  
Like living men, moved slowly through the mind  
By day, and were a trouble to my dreams.

Wisdom and Spirit of the universe !  
Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought  
That givest to forms and images a breath  
And everlasting motion, not in vain  
By day or star-light thus from my first dawn  
Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me  
The passions that build up our human soul ;  
Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,  
But with high objects, with enduring things—  
With life and nature—purifying thus  
The elements of feeling and of thought,  
And sanctifying, by such discipline,  
Both pain and fear, until we recognise  
A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.  
Nor was this fellowship vouchsafed to me  
With stinted kindness. In November days,  
When vapours rolling down the valley made  
A lonely scene more lonesome, among woods,  
At noon and 'mid the calm of summer nights,

When, by the margin of the trembling lake,  
Beneath the gloomy hills homeward I went  
In solitude, such intercourse was mine ;  
Mine was it in the fields both day and night,  
And by the waters, all the summer long.

And in the frosty season, when the sun  
Was set, and visible for many a mile  
The cottage windows blazed through twilight gloom,  
I heeded not their summons : happy time  
It was indeed for all of us—for me  
It was a time of rapture ! Clear and loud  
The village clock tolled six,—I wheeled about,  
Proud and exulting like an untired horse  
That cares not for his home. All shod with steel,  
We hissed along the polished ice in games  
Confederate, imitative of the chase  
And woodland pleasures,—the resounding horn,  
The pack loud chiming, and the hunted hare.  
So through the darkness and the cold we flew,  
And not a voice was idle ; with the din  
Smitten, the precipices rang aloud ;  
The leafless trees and every icy crag  
Tinkled like iron ; while far distant hills  
Into the tumult sent an alien sound  
Of melancholy not unnoticed, while the stars  
Eastward were sparkling clear, and in the west  
The orange sky of evening died away.  
Not seldom from the uproar I retired  
Into a silent bay, or sportively  
Glanced sideways, leaving the tumultuous throng,  
To cut across the reflex of a star  
That fled, and, flying still before me, gleaned  
Upon the glassy plain ; and oftentimes,  
When we had given our bodies to the wind,  
And all the shadowy banks on either side  
Came sweeping through the darkness, spinning still  
The rapid line of motion, then at once  
Have I, reclining back upon my heels,  
Stopped short ; yet still the solitary cliffs  
Wheeled by me—even as if the earth had rolled  
With visible motion her diurnal round !  
Behind me did they stretch in solemn train,  
Feebler and feebler, and I stood and watched  
Till all was tranquil as a dreamless sleep.

Ye Presences of Nature in the sky  
 And on the earth ! Ye Visions of the hills !  
 And Souls of lonely places ! can I think  
 A vulgar hope was yours when ye employed  
 Such ministry, when ye, through many a year  
 Haunting me thus among my boyish sports,  
 On caves and trees, upon the woods and hills,  
 Impressed, upon all forms, the characters  
 Of danger or desire ; and thus did make  
 The surface of the universal earth,  
 With triumph and delight, with hope and fear,  
 Work like a sea ?

Not uselessly employed,  
 Might I pursue this theme through every change  
 Of exercise and play, to which the year  
 Did summon us in his delightful round.

We were a noisy crew : the sun in heaven  
 Beheld not vales more beautiful than ours ;  
 Nor saw a band in happiness and joy  
 Richer, or worthier of the ground they trod.  
 I could record with no reluctant voice  
 The woods of autumn, and their hazel bowers  
 With milk-white clusters hung ; the rod and line,  
 True symbol of hope's foolishness, whose strong  
 And unproved enchantment led us on  
 By rocks and pools shut out from every star,  
 All the green summer, to forlorn cascades  
 Among the windings hid of mountain brooks.  
 —Unfading recollections ! at this hour  
 The heart is almost mine with which I felt,  
 From some hill-top on sunny afternoons,  
 The paper kite high among fleecy clouds  
 Pull at her rein like an impetuous courser ;  
 Or, from the meadows sent on gusty days,  
 Beheld her breast the wind, then suddenly  
 Dashed headlong, and rejected by the storm.

Ye lowly cottages wherein we dwelt,  
 A ministration of your own was yours ;  
 Can I forget you, being as you were  
 So beautiful among the pleasant fields  
 In which ye stood ? or can I here forget  
 The plain and seemly countenance with which  
 Ye dealt out your plain comforts ? Yet bad ye

Delights and exultations of your own.  
Eager and never weary we pursued  
Our home-amusements by the warm peat-fire  
At evening, when with pencil, and smooth slate  
In square divisions parcelled out and all  
With crosses and with cyphers scribbled o'er,  
We schemed and puzzled, head opposed to head  
In strife too humble to be named in verse :  
Or round the naked table, snow-white deal,  
Cherry or maple, sate in close array,  
And to the combat, Loo or Whist, led on  
A thick-ribbed army ; not, as in the world,  
Neglected and ungratefully thrown by  
Even for the very service they had wrought,  
But husbanded through many a long campaign.  
Uncouth assemblage was it, where no few  
Had changed their functions : some, plebeian cards  
Which Fate, beyond the promise of their birth,  
Had dignified, and called to represent  
The persons of departed potentates.  
Oh, with what echoes on the board they fell !  
Ironie diamonds,—clubs, hearts, diamonds, spades,  
A congregation piteously akin !  
Cheap matter offered they to boyish wit,  
Those sooty knaves, precipitated down  
With scoffs and taunts, like Vulcan out of heaven :  
The paramount ace, a moon in her eclipse,  
Queens gleaming through their splendour's last decay,  
And monarchs surly at the wrongs sustained  
By royal visages. Meanwhile abroad  
Incessant rain was falling, or the frost  
Raged bitterly, with keen and silent tooth ;  
And, interrupting oft that eager game,  
From under Esthwaite's splitting fields of ice  
The pent-up air, struggling to free itself,  
Gave out to meadow grounds and hills a loud  
Protracted yelling, like the noise of wolves  
Howling in troops along the Bothnic Main.

Nor, sedulous as I have been to trace  
How Nature by extrinsic passion first  
Peopled the mind with forms sublime or fair,  
And made me love them, may I here omit  
How other pleasures have been mine, and joys  
Of subtler origin ; how I have felt,

Not seldom even in that tempestuous time,  
Those hallowed and pure motions of the sense  
Which seem, in their simplicity, to own  
An intellectual charm; that calm delight  
Which, if I err not, surely must belong  
To those first-born affinities that fit  
Our new existence to existing things,  
And, in our dawn of being, constitute  
The bond of union between life and joy.

Yes, I remember when the changeful earth,  
And twice five summers on my mind had stamped  
The faces of the moving year, even then  
I held unconscious intercourse with beauty  
Old as creation, drinking in a pure  
Organic pleasure from the silver wreaths  
Of curling mist, or from the level plain  
Of waters coloured by impending clouds.

The sands of Westmoreland, the creeks and bays  
Of Cumbria's rocky limits, they can tell  
How, when the Sea threw off his evening shade,  
And to the shepherd's hut on distant hills  
Sent welcome notice of the rising moon,  
How I have stood, to fancies such as these  
A stranger, linking with the spectacle  
No conscious memory of a kindred sight,  
And bringing with me no peculiar sense  
Of quietness or peace; yet have I stood,  
Even while mine eye hath moved o'er many a league  
Of shining water, gathering as it seemed,  
Through every hair-breadth in that field of light,  
New pleasure like a bee among the flowers.

Thus oft amid those fits of vulgar joy  
Which, through all seasons, on a child's pursuits  
Are prompt attendants, 'mid that giddy bliss  
Which, like a tempest, works along the blood  
And is forgotten; even then I felt  
Gleams like the flashing of a shield;—the earth  
And common face of Nature spake to me  
Rememberable things; sometimes, 'tis true,  
By chance collisions and quaint accidents  
(Like those ill-sorted unions, work supposed  
Of evil-minded fairies), yet not vain

Nor profitless, if haply they impressed  
Collateral objects and appearances,  
Albeit lifeless then, and doomed to sleep  
Until maturer seasons called them forth  
To impregnate and to elevate the mind.  
—And if the vulgar joy by its own weight  
Wearied itself out of the memory,  
The scenes which were a witness of that joy  
Remained in their substantial lineaments  
Depicted on the brain, and to the eye  
Were visible, a daily sight; and thus  
By the impressive discipline of fear,  
By pleasure and repeated happiness,  
So frequently repeated, and by force  
Of obscure feelings representative  
Of things forgotten, these same scenes so bright,  
So beautiful, so majestic in themselves,  
Though yet the day was distant, did become  
Habitually dear, and all their forms  
And changeful colours by invisible links  
Were fastened to the affections.

I began

My story early—not misled, I trust,  
By an infirmity of love for days  
Disowned by memory—ere the breath of spring  
Planting my snowdrops among winter snows:  
Nor will it seem to thee, O Friend! so prompt  
In sympathy, that I have lengthened out  
With fond and feeble tongue a tedious tale.  
Meanwhile, my hope has been, that I might fetch  
Invigorating thoughts from former years;  
Might fix the wavering balance of my mind,  
And haply meet reproaches too, whose power  
May spur me on, in manhood now mature  
To honourable toil. Yet should these hopes  
Prove vain, and thus should neither I be taught  
To understand myself, nor thou to know  
With better knowledge how the heart was framed  
Of him thou lovest; need I dread from thee  
Harsh judgments, if the song be loth to quit  
Those recollected hours that have the charm  
Of visionary things, those lovely forms  
And sweet sensations that throw back our life,  
And almost make remotest infancy  
A visible scene, on which the sun is shining?

One end at least hath been attained ; my mind  
 Hath been revived, and if this genial mood  
 Desert me not, forthwith shall be brought down  
 Through later years the story of my life.  
 The road lies plain before me ;—'tis a theme  
 Single and of determined bounds ; and hence  
 I choose it rather at this time, than work  
 Of ampler or more varied argument,  
 Where I might be discomfited and lost :  
 And certain hopes are with me, that to thee  
 This labour will be welcome, honoured Friend !

## BOOK SECOND

SCHOOL-TIME (*continued*)

Thus far, O Friend ! have we, though leaving much  
 Unvisited, endeavoured to retrace  
 The simple ways in which my childhood walked ;  
 Those chiefly that first led me to the love  
 Of rivers, woods, and fields. The passion yet  
 Was in its birth, sustained as might befall  
 By nourishment that came unsought ; for still  
 From week to week, from month to month, we lived  
 A round of tumult. Duly were our games  
 Prolonged in summer till the daylight failed :  
 No chair remained before the doors ; the bench  
 And threshold steps were empty ; fast asleep  
 The labourer, and the old man who had sate  
 A later lingerer ; yet the revelry  
 Continued and the loud uproar : at last,  
 When all the ground was dark, and twinkling stars  
 Edged the black clouds, home and to bed we went,  
 Feverish with weary joints and beating minds.  
 Ah ! is there one who ever has been young,  
 Nor needs a warning voice to tame the pride  
 Of intellect and virtue's self-esteem ?  
 One is there, though the wisest and the best  
 Of all mankind, who covets not at times  
 Union that cannot be ;—who would not give  
 If so he might, to duty and to truth  
 The eagerness of infantine desire ?  
 A tranquillising spirit presses now  
 On my corporeal frame, so wide appears  
 The vacancy between me and those days  
 Which yet have such self-presence in my mind,

That, musing on them, often do I seem  
Two consciousnesses, conscious of myself  
And of some other Being. A rude mass  
Of native rock, left midway in the square  
Of our small market village, was the goal  
Or centre of these sports ; and when, returned  
After long absence, thither I repaired,  
Gone was the old grey stone, and in its place  
A smart Assembly-room usurped the ground  
That had been ours. There let the fiddle scream,  
And be ye happy ! Yet, my Friends ! I know  
That more than one of you will think with me  
Of those soft starry nights, and that old Dame  
From whom the stone was named, who there had sate,  
And watched her table with its huckster's wares  
Assiduous, through the length of sixty years.

We ran a boisterous course ; the year span round  
With giddy motion. But the time approached  
That brought with it a regular desire  
For calmer pleasures, when the winning forms  
Of Nature were collaterally attached  
To every scheme of holiday delight  
And every boyish sport, less grateful else  
And languidly pursued.

When summer came,  
Our pastime was, on bright half-holidays,  
To sweep along the plain of Windermere  
With rival oars ; and the selected bourne  
Was now an Island musical with birds  
That sang and ceased not ; now a Sister Isle  
Beneath the oaks' umbrageous covert, sown  
With lilies of the valley like a field ;  
And now a third small Island, where survived  
In solitude the ruins of a shrine  
Once to Our Lady dedicate, and served  
Daily with chaunted rites. In such a race  
So ended, disappointment could be none,  
Uneasiness, or pain, or jealousy :  
We rested in the shade, all pleased alike,  
Conquered and conqueror. Thus the pride of strength,  
And the vain-glory of superior skill,  
Were tempered ; thus was gradually produced  
A quiet independence of the heart ;  
And to my Friend who knows me I may add,

Fearless of blame, that hence for future days  
Ensued a diffidence and modesty,  
And I was taught to feel, perhaps too much,  
The self-sufficing power of Solitude.

Our daily meals were frugal, Sabine fare !  
More than we wished we knew the blessing then  
Of vigorous hunger—hence corporeal strength  
Unsapped by delicate viands ; for, exclude  
A little weekly stipend, and we lived  
Through three divisions of the quartered year  
In penniless poverty. But now to school  
From the half-yearly holidays returned,  
We came with weightier purses, that sufficed  
To furnish treats more costly than the Dame  
Of the old grey stone, from her scant board, supplied.  
Hence rustic dinners on the cool green ground,  
Or in the woods, or by a river side  
Or shady fountains, while among the leaves  
Soft airs were stirring, and the mid-day sun  
Unfelt shone brightly round us in our joy.  
Nor is my aim neglected if I tell  
How sometimes, in the length of those half-years,  
We from our funds drew largely ;—proud to curb,  
And eager to spur on, the galloping steed ;  
And with the courteous inn-keeper, whose stud  
Supplied our want, we haply might employ  
Sly subterfuge, if the adventure's bound  
Were distant : some famed temple where of yore  
The Druids worshipped, or the antique walls  
Of that large abbey, where within the Vale  
Of Nightshade, to St. Mary's honour built,  
Stands yet a mouldering pile with fractured arch,  
Belfry, and images, and living trees ;  
A holy scene !—Along the smooth green turf  
Our horses grazed. To more than inland peace,  
Left by the west wind sweeping overhead  
From a tumultuous ocean, trees and towers  
In that sequestered valley may be seen,  
Both silent and both motionless alike ;  
Such the deep shelter that is there, and such  
The safeguard for repose and quietness.

Our steeds remounted and the summons given,  
With whip and spur we through the chauntry flew

In uncouth race, and left the cross-legged knight  
And the stone-abbot, and that single wren  
Which one day sang so sweetly in the nave  
Of the old church, that—though from recent showers  
The earth was comfortless, and, touched by faint  
Internal breezes, sobbings of the place  
And respirations, from the roofless walls  
The shuddering ivy dripped large drops—yet still  
So sweetly 'mid the gloom the invisible bird  
Sang to herself, that there I could have made  
My dwelling-place, and lived for ever there  
To hear such music. Through the walls we flew  
And down the valley, and, a circuit made  
In wantonness of heart, through rough and smooth  
We scampered homewards. Oh, ye rocks and streams,  
And that still spirit shed from evening air!  
Even in this joyous time I sometimes felt  
Your presence, when with slackened step we breathed  
Along the sides of the steep hills, or when  
Lighted by gleams of moonlight from the sea  
We beat with thundering hoofs the level sand.

Midway on long Winander's eastern shore,  
Within the crescent of a pleasant bay,  
A tavern stood; no homely-featured house,  
Primeval like its neighbouring cottages,  
But 'twas a splendid place, the door beset  
With chaises, grooms, and liveries, and within  
Decanters, glasses, and the blood-red wine.  
In ancient times, and ere the Hall was built  
On the large island, had this dwelling been  
More worthy of a poet's love, a hut,  
Proud of its own bright fire and sycamore shade.  
But—though the rhymes were gone that once inscribed  
The threshold, and large golden characters,  
Spread o'er the spangled sign-board, had dislodged  
The old Lion and usurped his place, in slight  
And mockery of the rustic painter's hand—  
Yet, to this hour, the spot to me is dear  
With all its foolish pomp. The garden lay  
Upon a slope surmounted by a plain  
Of a small bowling-green; beneath us stood  
A grove, with gleams of water through the trees  
And over the tree-tops; nor did we want  
Refreshment, strawberries and mellow cream.

There, while through half an afternoon we played  
 On the smooth platform, whether skill prevailed  
 Or happy blunder triumphed, bursts of glee  
 Made all the mountains ring. But, ere night-fall,  
 When in our pinnace we returned at leisure  
 Over the shadowy lake, and to the beach  
 Of some small island steered our course with one,  
 The Minstrel of the Troop, and left him there,  
 And rowed off gently, while he blew his flute  
 Alone upon the rock—oh, then, the calm  
 And dead still water lay upon my mind  
 Even with a weight of pleasure, and the sky,  
 Never before so beautiful, sank down  
 Into my heart, and held me like a dream !  
 Thus were my sympathies enlarged, and thus  
 Daily the common range of visible things  
 Grew dear to me : already I began  
 To love the sun ; a boy I loved the sun,  
 Not as I since have loved him, as a pledge  
 And surety of our earthly life, a light  
 Which we behold and feel we are alive ;  
 Nor for his bounty to so many worlds—  
 But for this cause, that I had seen him lay  
 His beauty on the morning hills, had seen  
 The western mountain touch his setting orb,  
 In many a thoughtless hour, when, from excess  
 Of happiness, my blood appeared to flow  
 For its own pleasure, and I breathed with joy.  
 And, from like feelings, humble though intense,  
 To patriotic and domestic love  
 Analogous, the moon to me was dear ;  
 For I could dream away my purposes,  
 Standing to gaze upon her while she hung  
 Midway between the hills, as if she knew  
 No other region, but belonged to thee,  
 Yea, appertained by a peculiar right  
 To thee and thy grey huts, thou one dear Vale !

Those incidental charms which first attached  
 My heart to rural objects, day by day  
 Grew weaker, and I hasten on to tell  
 How Nature, intervenient till this time  
 And secondary, now at length was sought  
 For her own sake. But who shall parcel out  
 His intellect by geometric rules,

Split like a province into round and square?  
Who knows the individual hour in which  
His habits were first sown, even as a seed?  
Who that shall point as with a wand and say  
"This portion of the river of my mind  
Came from yon fountain?" Thou, my Friend! art one  
More deeply read in thy own thoughts; to thee  
Science appears but what in truth she is,  
Not as our glory and our absolute boast,  
But as a succedaneum, and a prop  
To our infirmity. No officious slave  
Art thou of that false secondary power  
By which we multiply distinctions, then  
Deem that our puny boundaries are things  
That we perceive, and not that we have made.  
To thee, unblinded by these formal arts,  
The unity of all hath been revealed,  
And thou wilt doubt, with me less aptly skilled  
Than many are to range the faculties  
In scale and order, class the cabinet  
Of their sensations, and in voluble phrase  
Run through the history and birth of each  
As of a single independent thing.  
Hard task, vain hope, to analyse the mind,  
If each most obvious and particular thought,  
Not in a mystical and idle sense,  
But in the words of Reason deeply weighed,  
Hath no beginning.

Blest the infant Babe,  
(For with my best conjecture I would trace  
Our Being's earthly progress,) blest the Babe,  
Nursed in his Mother's arms, who sinks to sleep  
Rocked on his Mother's breast; who with his soul  
Drinks in the feelings of his Mother's eye!  
For him, in one dear Presence, there exists  
A virtue which irradiates and exalts  
Objects through widest intercourse of sense.  
No outcast he, bewildered and depressed:  
Along his infant veins are interfused  
The gravitation and the filial bond  
Of nature that connect him with the world.  
Is there a flower, to which he points with hand  
Too weak to gather it, already love  
Drawn from love's purest earthly fount for him  
Hath beautified that flower; already shades

Of pity cast from inward tenderness  
Do fall around him upon aught that bears  
Unightly marks of violence or harm.  
Emphatically such a Being lives,  
Frail creature as he is, helpless as frail,  
An inmate of this active universe :  
For, feeling has to him imparted power  
That through the growing faculties of sense  
Doth like an agent of the one great Mind  
Create, creator and receiver both,  
Working but in alliance with the works  
Which it beholds.—Such, verily, is the first  
Poetic spirit of our human life,  
By uniform control of after years,  
In most, abated or suppressed ; in some,  
Through every change of growth and of decay,  
Pre-eminent till death.

From early days,  
Beginning not long after that first time  
In which, a Babe, by intercourse of touch  
I held mute dialogues with my Mother's heart,  
I have endeavoured to display the means  
Whereby this infant sensibility,  
Great birthright of our being, was in me  
Augmented and sustained. Yet is a path  
More difficult before me ; and I fear  
That in its broken windings we shall need  
The chamois' sinews, and the eagle's wing :  
For now a trouble came into my mind  
From unknown causes. I was left alone  
Seeking the visible world, not knowing why.  
The props of my affections were removed,  
And yet the building stood, as if sustained  
By its own spirit ! All that I beheld  
Was dear, and hence to finer influxes  
The mind lay open to a more exact  
And close communion. Many are our joys  
In youth, but oh ! what happiness to live  
When every hour brings palpable access  
Of knowledge, when all knowledge is delight,  
And sorrow is not there ! The seasons came,  
And every season wheresoe'er I moved  
Unfolded transitory qualities,  
Which, but for this most watchful power of love,  
Had been neglected ; left a register

Of permanent relations, else unknown.  
 Hence life, and change, and beauty, solitude  
 More active ever than "best society"—  
 Society made sweet as solitude  
 By silent inobtrusive sympathies,  
 And gentle agitations of the mind  
 From manifold distinctions, difference  
 Perceived in things, where, to the unwatchful eye,  
 No difference is, and hence, from the same source,  
 Sublimier joy; for I would walk alone,  
 Under the quiet stars, and at that time  
 Have felt whate'er there is of power in sound  
 To breathe an elevated mood, by form  
 Or image unprofaned; and I would stand,  
 If the night blackened with a coming storm,  
 Beneath some rock, listening to notes that are  
 The ghostly language of the ancient earth,  
 Or make their dim abode in distant winds.  
 Thence did I drink the visionary power;  
 And deem not profitless those fleeting moods  
 Of shadowy exultation: not for this,  
 That they are kindred to our purer mind  
 And intellectual life; but that the soul,  
 Remembering how she felt, but what she felt  
 Remembering not, retains an obscure sense  
 Of possible sublimity, whereto  
 With growing faculties she doth aspire,  
 With faculties still growing, feeling still  
 That whatsoever point they gain, they yet  
 Have something to pursue.

And not alone,  
 'Mid gloom and tumult, but no less 'mid fair  
 And tranquil scenes, that universal power  
 And fitness in the latent qualities  
 And essences of things, by which the mind  
 Is moved with feelings of delight, to me  
 Came strengthened with a superadded soul,  
 A virtue not its own. My morning walks  
 Were early;—oft before the hours of school  
 I travelled round our little lake, five miles  
 Of pleasant wandering. Happy time! more dear  
 For this, that one was by my side, a Friend,<sup>1</sup>  
 Then passionately loved; with heart how full  
 Would he peruse these lines! For many years

<sup>1</sup> The late Rev. John Fleming, of Rayrigg, Windermere.

Have since flowed in between us, and, our minds  
 Both silent to each other, at this time  
 We live as if those hours had never been.  
 Nor seldom did I lift our cottage latch  
 Far earlier, ere one smoke-wreath had risen  
 From human dwelling, or the vernal thrush  
 Was audible; and sate among the woods  
 Alone upon some jutting eminence,  
 At the first gleam of dawn-light, when the Vale,  
 Yet slumbering, lay in utter solitude.  
 How shall I seek the origin? where find  
 Faith in the marvellous things which then I felt?  
 Oft in these moments such a holy calm  
 Would overspread my soul, that bodily eyes  
 Were utterly forgotten, and what I saw  
 Appeared like something in myself, a dream,  
 A prospect in the mind.

"Twere long to tell  
 What spring and autumn, what the winter snows,  
 And what the summer shade, what day and night,  
 Evening and morning, sleep and waking, thought  
 From sources inexhaustible, poured forth  
 To feed the spirit of religious love  
 In which I walked with Nature. But let this  
 Be not forgotten, that I still retained  
 My first creative sensibility;  
 That by the regular action of the world  
 My soul was unsubdued. A plastic power  
 Abode with me; a forming hand, at times  
 Rebellious, acting in a devious mood;  
 A local spirit of his own, at war  
 With general tendency, but, for the most,  
 Subservient strictly to external things  
 With which it communed. An auxiliary light  
 Came from my mind, which on the setting sun  
 Bestowed new splendour; the melodious birds,  
 The fluttering breezes, fountains that run on  
 Murmuring so sweetly in themselves, obeyed  
 A like dominion, and the midnight storm  
 Grew darker in the presence of my eye:  
 Hence my obeisance, my devotion hence,  
 And hence my transport.

Nor should this, perchance,  
 Pass unrecorded, that I still had loved  
 The exercise and produce of a toil,

Than analytic industry to me  
More pleasing, and whose character I deem  
Is more poetic as resembling more  
Creative agency. The song would speak  
Of that interminable building reared  
By observation of affinities  
In objects where no brotherhood exists  
To passive minds. My seventeenth year was come,  
And, whether from this habit rooted now  
So deeply in my mind, or from excess  
In the great social principle of life  
Coercing all things into sympathy,  
To unorganic natures were transferred  
My own enjoyments; or the power of truth  
Coming in revelation, did converse  
With things that really are; I, at this time,  
Saw blessings spread around me like a sea.  
Thus while the days flew by, and years passed on,  
From Nature and her overflowing soul,  
I had received so much, that all my thoughts  
Were steeped in feeling; I was only then  
Contented, when with bliss ineffable  
I felt the sentiment of Being spread  
O'er all that moves and all that seemeth still;  
O'er all that, lost beyond the reach of thought  
And human knowledge, to the human eye  
Invisible, yet liveth to the heart;  
O'er all that leaps and runs, and shouts and sings,  
Or beats the gladsome air; o'er all that glides  
Beneath the wave, yea, in the wave itself,  
And mighty depth of waters. Wonder not  
If high the transport, great the joy I felt,  
Communing in this sort through earth and heaven  
With every form of creature, as it looked  
Towards the Uncreated with a countenance  
Of adoration, with an eye of love.  
One song they sang, and it was audible,  
Most audible, then, when the fleshly ear,  
O'ercome by humblest prelude of that strain,  
Forgot her functions, and slept undisturbed.

If this be error, and another faith  
Find easier access to the pious mind,  
Yet were I grossly destitute of all  
Those human sentiments that make this earth

So dear, if I should fail with grateful voice  
 To speak of you, ye mountains, and ye lakes  
 And sounding cataracts, ye mists and winds  
 That dwell among the hills where I was born.  
 If in my youth I have been pure in heart,  
 If, mingling with the world, I am content  
 With my own modest pleasures, and have lived  
 With God and Nature communing, removed  
 From little enmities and low desires—  
 The gift is yours ; if in these times of fear,  
 This melancholy waste of hopes o'erthrown,  
 If, 'mid indifference and apathy,  
 And wicked exultation when good men  
 On every side fall off, we know not how,  
 To selfishness, disguised in gentle names  
 Of peace and quiet and domestic love  
 Yet mingled not unwillingly with sneers  
 On visionary minds ; if, in this time  
 Of dereliction and dismay, I yet  
 Despair not of our nature, but retain  
 A more than Roman confidence, a faith  
 That fails not, in all sorrow my support,  
 The blessing of my life—the gift is yours  
 Ye winds and sounding cataracts ! 'tis yours,  
 Ye mountains ! thine, O Nature ! Thou hast fed  
 My lofty speculations ; and in thee,  
 For this uneasy heart of ours, I find  
 A never-failing principle of joy  
 And purest passion.

Thou, my Friend ! wert reared  
 In the great city, 'mid far other scenes ;  
 But we, by different roads, at length have gained  
 The selfsame bourne. And for this cause to thee  
 I speak, unapprehensive of contempt,  
 The insinuated scoff of coward tongues,  
 And all that silent language which so oft  
 In conversation between man and man  
 Blots from the human countenance all trace  
 Of beauty and of love. For thou hast sought  
 The truth in solitude, and, since the days  
 That gave thee liberty, full long desired,  
 To serve in Nature's temple, thou hast been  
 The most assiduous of her ministers ;  
 In many things my brother, chiefly here  
 In this our deep devotion.

Fare thee well!

Health and the quiet of a healthful mind  
Attend thee! seeking oft the haunts of men,  
And yet more often living with thyself,  
And for thyself, so haply shall thy days  
Be many, and a blessing to mankind.

### BOOK THIRD

#### RESIDENCE AT CAMBRIDGE

It was a dreary morning when the wheels  
Rolled over a wide plain o'erhung with clouds,  
And nothing cheered our way till first we saw  
The long-roofed chapel of King's College lift  
Turrets and pinnacles in answering files,  
Extended high above a dusky grove.

Advancing, we espied upon the road  
A student clothed in gown and tasselled cap,  
Striding along as if o'ertasked by Time,  
Or covetous of exercise and air;  
He passed—nor was I master of my eyes  
Till he was left an arrow's flight behind.  
As near and nearer to the spot we drew,  
It seemed to suck us in with an eddy's force.  
Onward we drove beneath the Castle; caught,  
While crossing Magdalene Bridge, a glimpse of Cam;  
And at the *Hoop* alighted, famous Inn.

My spirit was up, my thoughts were full of hope;  
Some friends I had, acquaintances who there  
Seemed friends, poor simple schoolboys, now hung round  
With honour and importance: in a world  
Of welcome faces up and down I roved;  
Questions, directions, warnings and advice,  
Flowed in upon me, from all sides; fresh day  
Of pride and pleasure! to myself I seemed  
A man of business and expense, and went  
From shop to shop about my own affairs,  
To Tutor or to Tailor, as befell,  
From street to street with loose and careless mind.

I was the Dreamer, they the Dream; I roamed  
Delighted through the motley spectacle;

Gowns grave, or gaudy, doctors, students, streets,  
 Courts, cloisters, flocks of churches, gateways, towers :  
 Migration strange for a stripling of the hills,  
 A northern villager.

As if the change  
 Had waited on some Fairy's wand, at once  
 Behold me rich in monies, and attired  
 In splendid garb, with hose of silk, and hair  
 Powdered like rimy trees, when frost is keen.  
 My lordly dressing-gown, I pass it by,  
 With other signs of manhood that supplied  
 The lack of beard.—The weeks went roundly on,  
 With invitations, suppers, wine and fruit,  
 Smooth housekeeping within, and all without  
 Liberal, and suiting gentleman's array.

The Evangelist St. John my patron was :  
 Three Gothic courts are his, and in the first  
 Was my abiding-place, a nook obscure ;  
 Right underneath, the College kitchens made  
 A humming sound, less tuneable than bees,  
 But hardly less industrious ; with shrill notes  
 Of sharp command and scolding intermixed.  
 Near me hung Trinity's loquacious clock,  
 Who never let the quarters, night or day,  
 Slip by him unproclaimed, and told the hours  
 Twice over with a male and female voice.  
 Her pealing organ was my neighbour too ;  
 And from my pillow, looking forth by light  
 Of moon or favouring stars, I could behold  
 The antechapel where the statue stood  
 Of Newton with his prism and silent face,  
 The marble index of a mind for ever  
 Voyaging through strange seas of Thought, alone.

Of College labours, of the Lecturer's room,  
 All studded round, as thick as chairs could stand,  
 With loyal students, faithful to their books,  
 Half-and-half idlers, hardy recusants,  
 And honest dunces—of important days,  
 Examinations, when the man was weighed  
 As in a balance ! of excessive hopes,  
 Tremblings withal and commendable fears,  
 Small jealousies, and triumphs good or bad—  
 Let others that know more speak as they know.

Such glory was but little sought by me,  
And little won. Yet from the first crude days  
Of settling time in this untried abode,  
I was disturbed at times by prudent thoughts,  
Wishing to hope without a hope, some fears  
About my future worldly maintenance,  
And, more than all, a strangeness in the mind,  
A feeling that I was not for that hour,  
Nor for that place. But wherefore be cast down?  
For (not to speak of Reason and her pure  
Reflective acts to fix the moral law  
Deep in the conscience, nor of Christian Hope,  
Bowing her head before her sister Faith  
As one far mightier), hither I had come,  
Bear witness Truth endowed with holy powers  
And faculties, whether to work or feel.  
Oft when the dazzling show no longer new  
Had ceased to dazzle, oftimes did I quit  
My comrades, leave the crowd, buildings and groves,  
And as I paced alone the level fields  
Far from those lovely sights and sounds sublime  
With which I had been conversant, the mind  
Drooped not; but there into herself returning,  
With prompt rebound seemed fresh as heretofore.  
At least I more distinctly recognised  
Her native instincts: let me dare to speak  
A higher language, say that now I felt  
What independent solaces were mine,  
To mitigate the injurious sway of place  
Or circumstance, how far soever changed  
In youth, or to be changed in after years.  
As if awakened, summoned, roused, constrained,  
I looked for universal things; perused  
The common countenance of earth and sky:  
Earth, nowhere unembellished by some trace  
Of that first Paradise whence man was driven;  
And sky, whose beauty and bounty are expressed  
By the proud name she bears—the name of Heaven.  
I called on both to teach me what they might;  
Or, turning the mind in upon herself,  
Pored, watched, expected, listened, spread my thoughts  
And spread them with a wider creeping; felt  
Incumbencies more awful, visitings  
Of the Upholder of the tranquil soul,  
That tolerates the indignities of Time,

And, from the centre of Eternity  
All finite motions overruling, lives  
In glory immutable. But peace! enough  
Here to record that I was mounting now  
To such community with highest truth—  
A track pursuing, not untrod before,  
From strict analogies by thought supplied  
Or consciousnesses not to be subdued.  
To every natural form, rock, fruits, or flower,  
Even the loose stones that cover the highway,  
I gave a moral life: I saw them feel,  
Or linked them to some feeling: the great mass  
Lay bedded in a quickening soul, and all  
That I beheld respired with inward meaning.  
Add that whate'er of Terror or of Love  
Or Beauty, Nature's daily face put on  
From transitory passion, unto this  
I was as sensitive as waters are  
To the sky's influence in a kindred mood  
Of passion; was obedient as a lute  
That waits upon the touches of the wind.  
Unknown, unthought of, yet I was most rich—  
I had a world about me—'twas my own;  
I made it, for it only lived to me,  
And to the God who sees into the heart.  
Such sympathies, though rarely, were betrayed  
By outward gestures and by visible looks:  
Some called it madness—so indeed it was,  
If child-like fruitfulness in passing joy,  
If steady moods of thoughtfulness matured  
To inspiration, sort with such a name;  
If prophecy be madness; if things viewed  
By poets in old time, and higher up  
By the first men, earth's first inhabitants,  
May in these tutored days no more be seen  
With undisordered sight. But leaving this,  
It was no madness, for the bodily eye  
Amid my strongest workings evermore  
Was searching out the lines of difference  
As they lie hid in all external forms,  
Near or remote, minute or vast; an eye  
Which, from a tree, a stone, a withered leaf,  
To the broad ocean and the azure heavens  
Spangled with kindred multitudes of stars,  
Could find no surface where its power might sleep;

Which spake perpetual logic to my soul,  
And by an unrelenting agency  
Did bind my feelings even as in a chain.

And here, O Friend ! have I retraced my life  
Up to an eminence, and told a tale  
Of matters which not falsely may be called  
The glory of my youth. Of genius, power,  
Creation and divinity itself  
I have been speaking, for my theme has been  
What passed within me. Not of outward things  
Done visibly for other minds, words, signs,  
Symbols or actions, but of my own heart  
Have I been speaking, and my youthful mind.  
O Heavens ! how awful is the might of souls,  
And what they do within themselves while yet  
The yoke of earth is new to them, the world  
Nothing but a wild field where they were sown.  
This is, in truth, heroic argument,  
This genuine prowess, which I wished to touch  
With hand however weak, but in the main  
It lies far hidden from the reach of words.  
Points have we all of us within our souls  
Where all stand single ; this I feel, and make  
Breathings for incommunicable powers ;  
But is not each a memory to himself,  
And, therefore, now that we must quit this theme,  
I am not heartless, for there's not a man  
That lives who hath not known his god-like hours,  
And feels not what an empire we inherit  
As natural beings in the strength of Nature.

No more : for now into a populous plain  
We must descend. A Traveller I am,  
Whose tale is only of himself ; even so,  
So be it, if the pure of heart be prompt  
To follow, and if thou, my honoured Friend !  
Who in these thoughts art ever at my side,  
Support, as heretofore, my fainting steps.

It hath been told, that when the first delight  
That flashed upon me from this novel show  
Had failed, the mind returned into herself ;  
Yet true it is, that I had made a change  
In climate, and my nature's outward coat  
Changed also slowly and insensibly.

Full oft the quiet and exalted thoughts  
 Of loneliness gave way to empty noise  
 And superficial pastimes ; now and then  
 Forced labour, and more frequently forced hopes ;  
 And, worst of all, a treasonable growth  
 Of indecisive judgments, that impaired  
 And shook the mind's simplicity.—And yet  
 This was a gladsome time. Could I behold—  
 Who, less insensible than sodden clay  
 In a sea-river's bed at ebb of tide,  
 Could have beheld,—with undelighted heart,  
 So many happy youths, so wide and fair  
 A congregation in its budding-time  
 Of health, and hope, and beauty, all at once  
 So many divers samples from the growth  
 Of life's sweet season—could have seen unmoved  
 That miscellaneous garland of wild flowers  
 Decking the matron temples of a place  
 So famous through the world? To me, at least,  
 It was a goodly prospect : for, in sooth,  
 Though I had learnt betimes to stand unpropped,  
 And independent musings pleased me so  
 That spells seemed on me when I was alone,  
 Yet could I only cleave to solitude  
 In lonely places ; if a throng was near  
 That way I leaned by nature ; for my heart  
 Was social, and loved idleness and joy.

Not seeking those who might participate  
 My deeper pleasures (nay, I had not once,  
 Though not unused to mutter lonesome songs,  
 Even with myself divided such delight,  
 Or looked that way for aught that might be clothed  
 In human language), easily I passed  
 From the remembrances of better things,  
 And slipped into the ordinary works  
 Of careless youth, unburthened, unalarmed.  
*Caverns* there were within my mind which sun  
 Could never penetrate, yet did there not  
 Want store of leafy *arbours* where the light  
 Might enter in at will. Companionships,  
 Friendships, acquaintances, were welcome all.  
 We sauntered, played, or rioted ; we talked  
 Unprofitable talk at morning hours ;  
 Drifted about along the streets and walks,

Read lazily in trivial books, went forth  
To gallop through the country in blind zeal  
Of senseless horsemanship, or on the breast  
Of Cam sailed boisterously, and let the stars  
Come forth, perhaps without one quiet thought.

Such was the tenor of the second act  
In this new life. Imagination slept,  
And yet not utterly. I could not print  
Ground where the grass had yielded to the steps  
Of generations of illustrious men,  
Unmoved. I could not always lightly pass  
Through the same gateways, sleep where they had slept,  
Wake where they waked, range that inclosure old,  
That garden of great intellects, undisturbed.  
Place also by the side of this dark sense  
Of noble feeling, that those spiritual men,  
Even the great Newton's own ethereal self,  
Seemed humbled in these precincts thence to be  
The more endeared. Their several memories here  
(Even like their persons in their portraits clothed  
With the accustomed garb of daily life)  
Put on a lowly and a touching grace  
Of more distinct humanity, that left  
All genuine admiration unimpaired.

Beside the pleasant Mill of Trompington  
I laughed with Chaucer in the hawthorn shade ;  
Heard him, while birds were warbling, tell his tales  
Of amorous passion. And that gentle Bard,  
Chosen by the Muses for their Page of State—  
Sweet Spenser, moving through his clouded heaven  
With the moon's beauty and the moon's soft pace,  
I called him Brother, Englishman, and Friend !  
Yea, our blind Poet, who in his later day,  
Stood almost single ; uttering odious truth—  
Darkness before, and danger's voice behind,  
Soul awful—if the earth has ever lodged  
An awful soul—I seemed to see him here  
Familiarly, and in his scholar's dress  
Bounding before me, yet a stripling youth—  
A boy, no better, with his rosy cheeks  
Angelical, keen eye, courageous look,  
And conscious step of purity and pride.  
Among the band of my compeers was one

Whom chance had stationed in the very room  
Honoured by Milton's name. O temperate Bard !  
Be it confest that, for the first time, seated  
Within thy innocent lodge and oratory,  
One of a festive circle, I poured out  
Libations, to thy memory drank, till pride  
And gratitude grew dizzy in a brain  
Never excited by the fumes of wine  
Before that hour, or since. Then, forth I ran  
From the assembly ; through a length of streets,  
Ran, ostrich-like, to reach our chapel door  
In not a desperate or opprobrious time,  
Albeit long after the importunate bell  
Had stopped, with wearisome Cassandra voice  
No longer haunting the dark winter night.  
Call back, O Friend ! a moment to thy mind,  
The place itself and fashion of the rites.  
With careless ostentation shouldering up  
My surplice, through the inferior throng I clove,  
Of the plain Burghers, who in audience stood  
On the last skirts of their permitted ground,  
Under the pealing organ. Empty thoughts !  
I am ashamed of them : and that great Bard,  
And thou, O Friend ! who in thy ample mind  
Hast placed me high above my best deserts,  
Ye will forgive the weakness of that hour,  
In some of its unworthy vanities,  
Brother to many more.

In this mixed sort  
The months passed on, remissly, not given up  
To wilful alienation from the right,  
Or walks of open scandal, but in vague  
And loose indifference, easy likings, aims  
Of a low pitch—duty and zeal dismissed,  
Yet Nature, or a happy course of things  
Not doing in their stead the needful work.  
The memory languidly revolved, the heart  
Reposed in noontide rest, the inner pulse  
Of contemplation almost failed to beat.  
Such life might not inaptly be compared  
To a floating island, an amphibious spot  
Unsound, of spongy texture, yet withal  
Not wanting a fair face of water weeds  
And pleasant flowers. The thirst of living praise,  
Fit reverence for the glorious Dead, the sight

Of those long vistas, sacred catacombs,  
Where mighty *minds* lie visibly entombed,  
Have often stirred the heart of youth, and bred  
A fervent love of rigorous discipline.—  
Alas ! such high emotion touched not me.  
Look was there none within these walls to shame  
My easy spirits, and discountenance  
Their light composure, far less to instil  
A calm resolve of mind, firmly addressed  
To puissant efforts. Nor was this the blame  
Of others but my own ; I should, in truth,  
As far as doth concern my single self,  
Misdeem most widely, lodging it elsewhere :  
For I, bred up, 'mid Nature's luxuries,  
Was a spoiled child, and, rambling like the wind,  
As I had done in daily intercourse  
With those crystalline rivers, solemn heights,  
And mountains, ranging like a fowl of the air,  
I was ill-tutored for captivity ;  
To quit my pleasure, and, from month to month,  
Take up a station calmly on the perch  
Of sedentary peace. Those lovely forms  
Had also left less space within my mind,  
Which, wrought upon instinctively, had found  
A freshness in those objects of her love,  
A winning power, beyond all other power.  
Not that I slighted books,—that were to lack  
All sense,—but other passions in me ruled,  
Passions more fervent, making me less prompt  
To in-door study than was wise or well,  
Or suited to those years. Yet I, though used  
In magisterial liberty to rove,  
Culling such flowers of learning as might tempt  
A random choice, could shadow forth a place  
(If now I yield not to a flattering dream)  
Whose studious aspect should have bent me down  
To instantaneous service ; should at once  
Have made me pay to science and to arts  
And written lore, acknowledged my liege lord,  
A homage frankly offered up, like that  
Which I had paid to Nature. Toil and pains  
In this recess, by thoughtful Fancy built,  
Should spread from heart to heart ; and stately groves,  
Majestic edifices, should not want  
A corresponding dignity within.

The congregating temper that pervades  
Our unripe years, not wasted, should be taught  
To minister to works of high attempt—  
Works which the enthusiast would perform with love.  
Youth should be awed, religiously possessed  
With a conviction of the power that waits  
On knowledge, when sincerely sought and prized  
For its own sake, on glory and on praise  
If but by labour won, and fit to endure  
The passing day ; should learn to put aside  
Her trappings here, should strip them off abashed  
Before antiquity and stedfast truth  
And strong book-mindedness ; and over all  
A healthy sound simplicity should reign,  
A seemly plainness, name it what you will,  
Republican or pious.

    If these thoughts  
Are a gratuitous emblazonry  
That mocks the recreant age *we* live in, then  
Be Folly and False-seeming free to affect  
Whatever formal gait of discipline  
Shall raise them highest in their own esteem—  
Let them parade among the Schools at will,  
But spare the House of God. Was ever known  
The witless shepherd who persists to drive  
A flock that thirsts not to a pool disliked ?  
A weight must surely hang on days begun  
And ended with such mockery. Be wise,  
Ye Presidents and Deans, and, till the spirit  
Of ancient times revive, and youth be trained  
At home in pious service, to your bells  
Give seasonable rest, for 'tis a sound  
Hollow as ever vexed the tranquil air ;  
And your officious doings bring disgrace  
On the plain steeples of our English Church,  
Whose worship, 'mid remotest village trees,  
Suffers for this. Even Science, too, at hand  
In daily sight of this irreverence,  
Is smitten thence with an unnatural taint,  
Loses her just authority, falls beneath  
Collateral suspicion, else unknown.  
This truth escaped me not, and I confess,  
That having 'mid my native hills given loose  
To a schoolboy's vision, I had raised a pile  
Upon the basis of the coming time,

That fell in ruins round me. Oh, what joy  
To see a sanctuary for our country's youth  
Informed with such a spirit as might be  
Its own protection; a primeval grove,  
Where, though the shades with cheerfulness were filled,  
Nor indigent of songs warbled from crowds  
In under-coverts, yet the countenance  
Of the whole place should bear a stamp of awe;  
A habitation sober and demure  
For ruminating creatures; a domain  
For quiet things to wander in; a haunt  
In which the heron should delight to feed  
By the shy rivers, and the pelican  
Upon the cypress spire in lonely thought  
Might sit and sun himself.—Alas! Alas!  
In vain for such solemnity I looked;  
Mine eyes were crossed by butterflies, ears vexed  
By chattering popinjays; the inner heart  
Seemed trivial, and the impresses without  
Of a too gaudy region.

Different sight

Those venerable Doctors saw of old,  
When all who dwelt within these famous walls  
Led in abstemiousness a studious life;  
When, in forlorn and naked chambers cooped  
And crowded, o'er the ponderous books they hung  
Like caterpillars eating out their way  
In silence, or with keen devouring noise  
Not to be tracked or fathered. Princes then  
At matins froze, and couched at curfew-time,  
Trained up through piety and zeal to prize  
Spare diet, patient labour, and plain weeds.  
O seat of Arts! renowned throughout the world!  
Far different service in those homely days  
The Muses' modest nurslings underwent  
From their first childhood: in that glorious time  
When Learning, like a stranger come from far,  
Sounding through Christian lands her trumpet, roused  
Peasant and king; when boys and youths, the growth  
Of ragged villages and crazy huts,  
Forsook their homes, and, errant in the quest  
Of Patron, famous school or friendly nook,  
Where, pensioned, they in shelter might sit down,  
From town to town and through wide scattered realms  
Journeyed with ponderous folios in their hands;

And often, starting from some covert place,  
 Saluted the chance comer on the road,  
 Crying, "An obolus, a penny give  
 To a poor scholar!"—when illustrious men,  
 Lovers of truth, by penury constrained,  
 Bucer, Erasmus, or Melancthon, read  
 Before the doors or windows of their cells  
 By moonshine through mere lack of taper light.

But peace to vain regrets! We see but darkly  
 Even when we look behind us, and best things  
 Are not so pure by nature that they needs  
 Must keep to all, as fondly all believe,  
 Their highest promise. If the mariner,  
 When at reluctant distance he hath passed  
 Some tempting island, could but know the ills  
 That must have fallen upon him had he brought  
 His bark to land upon the wished-for shore,  
 Good cause would oft be his to thank the surf  
 Whose white belt scared him thence, or wind that blew  
 Inexorably adverse: for myself  
 I grieve not; happy is the gowned youth,  
 Who only misses what I missed, who falls  
 No lower than I fell.

I did not love,  
 Judging not ill perhaps, the timid course  
 Of our scholastic studies; could have wished  
 To see the river flow with ampler range  
 And freer pace; but more, far more, I grieved  
 To see displayed among an eager few,  
 Who in the field of contest persevered,  
 Passions unworthy of youth's generous heart  
 And mounting spirit, pitiaably repaid,  
 When so disturbed, whatever palms are won.  
 From these I turned to travel with the shoal  
 Of more unthinking natures, easy minds  
 And pillowy; yet not wanting love that makes  
 The day pass lightly on, when foresight sleeps,  
 And wisdom and the pledges interchanged  
 With our own inner being are forgot.

Yet was this deep vacation not given up  
 To utter waste. Hitherto I had stood  
 In my own mind remote from social life,  
 (At least from what we commonly so name,)

Like a lone shepherd on a promontory,  
Who lacking occupation looks far forth  
Into the boundless sea, and rather makes  
Than finds what he beholds. And sure it is,  
That this first transit from the smooth delights  
And wild outlandish walks of simple youth  
To something that resembles an approach  
Towards human business, to a privileged world  
Within a world, a midway residence  
With all its intervenient imagery,  
Did better suit my visionary mind,  
Far better, than to have been bolted forth,  
Thrust out abruptly into Fortune's way  
Among the conflicts of substantial life ;  
By a more just gradation did lead on  
To higher things ; more naturally matured,  
For permanent possession, better fruits,  
Whether of truth or virtue, to ensue.  
In serious mood, but oftener, I confess,  
With playful zest of fancy, did we note  
(How could we less?) the manners and the ways  
Of those who lived distinguished by the badge  
Of good or ill report ; or those with whom  
By frame of Academic discipline  
We were perforce connected, men whose sway  
And known authority of office served  
To set our minds on edge, and did no more.  
Nor wanted we rich pastime of this kind,  
Found everywhere, but chiefly in the ring  
Of the grave Elders, men unsoured, grotesque  
In character, tricked out like aged trees  
Which through the lapse of their infirmity  
Give ready place to any random seed  
That chooses to be reared upon their trunks.

Here on my view, confronting vividly  
Those shepherd swains whom I had lately left,  
Appeared a different aspect of old age ;  
How different ! yet both distinctly marked,  
Objects embossed to catch the general eye,  
Or portraitures for special use designed,  
As some might seem, so aptly do they serve  
To illustrate Nature's book of rudiments—  
That book upheld as with maternal care  
When she would enter on her tender scheme

Of teaching comprehension with delight,  
And mingling playful with pathetic thoughts.

The surfaces of artificial life  
And manners finely wrought, the delicate race  
Of colours, lurking, gleaming up and down  
Through that state arras woven with silk and gold ;  
This wily interchange of snaky hues,  
Willingly or unwillingly revealed,  
I neither knew nor cared for ; and as such  
Were wanting here, I took what might be found  
Of less elaborate fabric. At this day  
I smile, in many a mountain solitude  
Conjuring up scenes as obsolete in freaks  
Of character, in points of wit as broad,  
As aught by wooden images performed  
For entertainment of the gaping crowd  
At wake or fair. And oftentimes do flit  
Remembrances before me of old men—  
Old humourists, who have been long in their graves,  
And having almost in my mind put off  
Their human names, have into phantoms passed  
Of texture midway between life and books.

I play the loiterer : 'tis enough to note  
That here in dwarf proportions were expressed  
The limbs of the great world ; its eager strifes  
Collaterally pourtrayed, as in mock fight,  
A tournament of blows, some hardly dealt  
Though short of mortal combat ; and whate'er  
Might in this pageant be supposed to hit  
An artless rustic's notice, this way less,  
More that way, was not wasted upon me—  
And yet the spectacle may well demand  
A more substantial name, no mimic show,  
Itself a living part of a live whole,  
A creek in the vast sea ; for, all degrees  
And shapes of spurious fame and short-lived praise  
Here sate in state, and fed with daily alms  
Retainers won away from solid good ;  
And here was Labour, his own bond-slave ; Hope,  
That never set the pains against the prize ;  
Idleness halting with his weary clog,  
And poor misguided Shame, and witless Fear,  
And simple Pleasure foraging for Death ;

Honour misplaced, and Dignity astray ;  
Feuds, factions, flatteries, enmity, and guile,  
Murmuring submission, and bald government,  
(The idol weak as the idolater),  
And Decency and Custom starving Truth,  
And blind Authority beating with his staff  
The child that might have led him ; Emptiness  
Followed as of good omen, and meek Worth  
Left to herself unheard of and unknown.

Of these and other kindred notices  
I cannot say what portion is in truth  
The naked recollection of that time,  
And what may rather have been called to life  
By after-meditation. But delight  
That, in an easy temper lulled asleep,  
Is still with Innocence its own reward,  
This was not wanting. Carelessly I roamed  
As through a wide museum from whose stores  
A casual rarity is singled out  
And has its brief perusal, then gives way  
To others, all supplanted in their turn ;  
Till 'mid this crowded neighbourhood of things  
That are by nature most unneighbourly,  
The head turns round and cannot right itself ;  
And though an aching and a barren sense  
Of gay confusion still be uppermost,  
With few wise longings and but little love,  
Yet to the memory something cleaves at last,  
Whence profit may be drawn in times to come.

Thus in submissive idleness, my Friend !  
The labouring time of autumn, winter, spring,  
Eight months ! rolled pleasingly away ; the ninth  
Came and returned me to my native hills.

## BOOK FOURTH

## SUMMER VACATION

BRIGHT was the summer's noon when quickening steps  
Followed each other till a dreary moor  
Was crossed, a bare ridge clomb, upon whose top  
Standing alone, as from a rampart's edge,  
I overlooked the bed of Windermere,  
Like a vast river, stretching in the sun.

With exultation, at my feet I saw  
Lake, islands, promontories, gleaming bays,  
A universe of Nature's fairest forms  
Proudly revealed with instantaneous burst,  
Magnificent, and beautiful, and gay.  
I bounded down the hill shouting amain  
For the old Ferryman ; to the shout the rocks  
Replied, and when the Charon of the flood  
Had staid his oars, and touched the jutting pier,  
I did not step into the well-known boat  
Without a cordial greeting. Thence with speed  
Up the familiar hill I took my way  
Towards that sweet Valley<sup>1</sup> where I had been reared ;  
'Twas but a short hour's walk, ere veering round  
I saw the snow-white church upon her hill  
Sit like a thronèd Lady, sending out  
A gracious look all over her domain.  
Yon azure smoke betrays the lurking town ;  
With eager footsteps I advance and reach  
The cottage threshold where my journey closed.  
Glad welcome had I, with some tears, perhaps,  
From my old Dame, so kind and motherly,  
While she perused me with a parent's pride.  
The thoughts of gratitude shall fall like dew  
Upon thy grave, good creature ! While my heart  
Can beat never will I forget thy name.  
Heaven's blessing be upon thee where thou liest  
After thy innocent and busy stir  
In narrow cares, thy little daily growth  
Of calm enjoyments, after eighty years,  
And more than eighty, of untroubled life ;  
Childless, yet by the strangers to thy blood  
Honoured with little less than filial love.  
What joy was mine to see thee once again,  
Thee and thy dwelling, and a crowd of things  
About its narrow precincts all beloved,  
And many of them seeming yet my own !  
Why should I speak of what a thousand hearts  
Have felt, and every man alive can guess ?  
The rooms, the court, the garden were not left  
Long unsaluted, nor the sunny seat  
Round the stone table under the dark pine,  
Friendly to studious or to festive hours ;  
Nor that unruly child of mountain birth,

<sup>1</sup> Hawkshead.

The famous brook, who, soon as he was boxed  
Within our garden, found himself at once,  
As if by trick insidious and unkind,  
Stripped of his voice and left to dimple down  
(Without an effort and without a will)  
A channel paved by man's officious care.  
I looked at him and smiled, and smiled again,  
And in the press of twenty thousand thoughts,  
"Ha," quoth I, "pretty prisoner, are you there!"  
Well might sarcastic Fancy then have whispered,  
"An emblem here behold of thy own life;  
In its late course of even days with all  
Their smooth enthrallment;" but the heart was full,  
Too full for that reproach. My aged Dame  
Walked proudly at my side: she guided me;  
I willing, nay—nay, wishing to be led.  
—The face of every neighbour whom I met  
Was like a volume to me; some were hailed  
Upon the road, some busy at their work,  
Unceremonious greetings interchanged  
With half the length of a long field between.  
Among my schoolfellows I scattered round  
Like recognitions, but with some constraint  
Attended, doubtless, with a little pride,  
But with more shame, for my habiliments,  
The transformation wrought by gay attire.  
Not less delighted did I take my place  
At our domestic table: and, dear Friend!  
In this endeavour simply to relate  
A Poet's history, may I leave untold  
The thankfulness with which I laid me down  
In my accustomed bed, more welcome now  
Perhaps than if it had been more desired  
Or been more often thought of with regret;  
That lowly bed whence I had heard the wind  
Roar, and the rain beat hard; where I so oft  
Had lain awake on summer nights to watch  
The moon in splendour couched among the leaves  
Of a tall ash, that near our cottage stood;  
Had watched her with fixed eyes while to and fro  
In the dark summit of the waving tree  
She rocked with every impulse of the breeze.

Among the favourites whom it pleased me well  
To see again, was one by ancient right

Our inmate, a rough terrier of the hills ;  
By birth and call of nature pre-ordained  
To hunt the badger and unearth the fox  
Among the impervious crags, but having been  
From youth our own adopted, he had passed  
Into a gentler service. And when first  
The boyish spirit flagged, and day by day  
Along my veins I kindled with the stir,  
The fermentation, and the vernal heat  
Of poesy, affecting private shades  
Like a sick Lover, then this dog was used  
To watch me, an attendant and a friend,  
Obsequious to my steps early and late,  
Though often of such dilatory walk  
Tired, and uneasy at the halts I made.  
A hundred times when, roving high and low,  
I have been harassed with the toil of verse,  
Much pains and little progress, and at once  
Some lovely Image in the song rose up  
Full-formed, like Venus rising from the sea ;  
Then have I darted forwards to let loose  
My hand upon his back with stormy joy,  
Caressing him again and yet again.  
And when at evening on the public way  
I sauntered, like a river murmuring  
And talking to itself when all things else  
Are still, the creature trotted on before ;  
Such was his custom ; but whene'er he met  
A passenger approaching, he would turn  
To give me timely notice, and straightway,  
Grateful for that admonishment, I hushed  
My voice, composed my gait, and, with the air  
And mien of one whose thoughts are free, advanced  
To give and take a greeting that might save  
My name from piteous rumours, such as wait  
On men suspected to be crazed in brain.

Those walks well worthy to be prized and loved—  
Regretted !—that word, too, was on my tongue,  
But they were richly laden with all good,  
And cannot be remembered but with thanks  
And gratitude, and perfect joy of heart—  
Those walks in all their freshness now came back  
Like a returning Spring. When first I made  
Once more the circuit of our little lake,

If ever happiness hath lodged with man,  
That day consummate happiness was mine,  
Wide-spreading, steady, calm, contemplative.  
The sun was set, or setting, when I left  
Our cottage door, and evening soon brought on  
A sober hour, not winning or serene,  
For cold and raw the air was, and untuned :  
But as a face we love is sweetest then  
When sorrow damps it, or, whatever look  
It chance to wear, is sweetest if the heart  
Have fulness in herself ; even so with me  
It fared that evening. Gently did my soul  
Put off her veil, and, self-transmuted, stood  
Naked, as in the presence of her God.  
While on I walked, a comfort seemed to touch  
A heart that had not been disconsolate :  
Strength came where weakness was not known to be,  
At least not felt ; and restoration came  
Like an intruder knocking at the door  
Of unacknowledged weariness. I took  
The balance, and with firm hand weighed myself.  
—Of that external scene which round me lay,  
Little, in this abstraction, did I see ;  
Remembered less ; but I had inward hopes  
And swellings of the spirit, was rapt and soothed,  
Conversed with promises, had glimmering views  
How life pervades the undecaying mind ;  
How the immortal soul with God-like power  
Informs, creates, and thaws the deepest sleep  
That time can lay upon her ; how on earth,  
Man, if he do but live within the light  
Of high endeavours, daily spreads abroad  
His being armed with strength that cannot fail.  
Nor was there want of milder thoughts, of love,  
Of innocence, and holiday repose ;  
And more than pastoral quiet, 'mid the stir  
Of boldest projects, and a peaceful end  
At last, or glorious, by endurance won.  
Thus musing, in a wood I sate me down  
Alone, continuing there to muse : the slopes  
And heights meanwhile were slowly overspread  
With darkness, and before a rippling breeze  
The long lake lengthened out its hoary line,  
And in the sheltered coppice where I sate,  
Around me from among the hazel leaves,

Now here, now there, moved by the straggling wind,  
Came ever and anon a breath-like sound,  
Quick as the pantings of the faithful dog,  
The off and on companion of my walk ;  
And such, at times, believing them to be,  
I turned my head to look if he were there ;  
Then into solemn thought I passed once more.

A freshness also found I at this time  
In human Life, the daily life of those  
Whose occupations really I loved ;  
The peaceful scene oft filled me with surprise  
Changed like a garden in the heat of spring  
After an eight-days' absence. For (to omit  
The things which were the same and yet appeared  
Far otherwise) amid this rural solitude,  
A narrow Vale where each was known to all,  
'Twas not indifferent to a youthful mind  
To mark some sheltering bower or sunny nook  
Where an old man had used to sit alone,  
Now vacant ; pale-faced babes whom I had left  
In arms, now rosy prattlers at the feet  
Of a pleased grandame tottering up and down ;  
And growing girls whose beauty, filched away  
With all its pleasant promises, was gone  
To deck some slighted playmate's homely cheek.

Yes, I had something of a subtler sense,  
And often looking round was moved to smiles  
Such as a delicate work of humour breeds ;  
I read, without design, the opinions, thoughts,  
Of those plain-living people now observed  
With clearer knowledge ; with another eye  
I saw the quiet woodman in the woods,  
The shepherd roam the hills. With new delight,  
This chiefly, did I note my grey-haired Dame ;  
Saw her go forth to church or other work  
Of state equipped in monumental trim ;  
Short velvet cloak, (her bonnet of the like,)  
A mantle such as Spanish Cavaliers  
Wore in old times. Her smooth domestic life,  
Affectionate without disquietude,  
Her talk, her business, pleased me ; and no less  
Her clear though shallow stream of piety  
That ran on Sabbath days a fresher course ;

With thoughts unfelt till now I saw her read  
Her Bible on hot Sunday afternoons,  
And loved the book, when she had dropped asleep  
And made of it a pillow for her head.

Nor less do I remember to have felt,  
Distinctly manifested at this time,  
A human-heartedness about my love  
For objects hitherto the absolute wealth  
Of my own private being and no more ;  
Which I had loved, even as a blessed spirit  
Or Angel, if he were to dwell on earth,  
Might love in individual happiness.  
But now there opened on me other thoughts  
Of change, congratulation or regret,  
A pensive feeling ! It spread far and wide ;  
The trees, the mountains shared it, and the brooks,  
The stars of Heaven, now seen in their old haunts—  
White Sirius glittering o'er the southern crags,  
Orion with his belt, and those fair Seven,  
Acquaintances of every little child,  
And Jupiter, my own beloved star !  
Whatever shadings of mortality,  
Whatever imports from the world of death  
Had come among these objects heretofore,  
Were, in the main, of mood less tender : strong,  
Deep, gloomy were they, and severe ; the scatterings  
Of awe or tremulous dread, that had given way  
In later youth to yearnings of a love  
Enthusiastic, to delight and hope.

As one who hangs down-bending from the side  
Of a slow-moving boat, upon the breast  
Of a still water, solacing himself  
With such discoveries as his eye can make  
Beneath him in the bottom of the deep,  
Sees many beauteous sights—weeds, fishes, flowers,  
Grots, pebbles, roots of trees, and fancies more,  
Yet often is perplexed, and cannot part  
The shadow from the substance, rocks and sky,  
Mountains and clouds, reflected in the depth  
Of the clear flood, from things which there abide  
In their true dwelling ; now is crossed by gleam  
Of his own image, by a sunbeam now,  
And wavering motions sent he knows not whence,

Impediments that make his task more sweet ;  
 Such pleasant office have we long pursued  
 Incumbent o'er the surface of past time  
 With like success, nor often have appeared  
 Shapes fairer or less doubtfully discerned  
 Than these to which the Tale, indulgent Friend !  
 Would now direct thy notice. Yet in spite  
 Of pleasure won, and knowledge not withheld,  
 There was an inner falling off—I loved,  
 Loved deeply all that had been loved before,  
 More deeply even than ever : but a swarm  
 Of heady schemes jostling each other, gawds,  
 And feast and dance, and public revelry,  
 And sports and games (too grateful in themselves,  
 Yet in themselves less grateful, I believe,  
 Than as they were a badge glossy and fresh  
 Of manliness and freedom) all conspired  
 To lure my mind from firm habitual quest  
 Of feeding pleasures, to depress the zeal  
 And damp those yearnings which had once been mine—  
 A wild, unworldly-minded youth, given up  
 To his own eager thoughts. It would demand  
 Some skill, and longer time than may be spared  
 To paint these vanities, and how they wrought  
 In haunts where they, till now, had been unknown.  
 It seemed the very garments that I wore  
 Preyed on my strength, and stopped the quiet stream  
 Of self-forgetfulness.

Yes, that heartless chase  
 Of trivial pleasures was a poor exchange  
 For books and nature at that early age.  
 'Tis true, some casual knowledge might be gained  
 Of character or life ; but at that time,  
 Of manners put to school I took small note,  
 And all my deeper passions lay elsewhere.  
 Far better had it been to exalt the mind  
 By solitary study, to uphold  
 Intense desire through meditative peace ;  
 And yet, for chastisement of these regrets,  
 The memory of one particular hour  
 Doth here rise up against me. 'Mid a throng  
 Of maids and youths, old men, and matrons staid,  
 A medley of all tempers, I had passed  
 The night in dancing, gaiety, and mirth,  
 With din of instruments and shuffling feet,

And glancing forms, and tapers glittering,  
And unaimed prattle flying up and down ;  
Spirits upon the stretch, and here and there  
Slight shocks of young love-liking interspersed,  
Whose transient pleasure mounted to the head,  
And tingled through the veins. Ere we retired,  
The cock had crowed, and now the eastern sky  
Was kindling, not unseen, from humble copse  
And open field, through which the pathway wound,  
And homeward led my steps. Magnificent  
The morning rose, in memorable pomp,  
Glorious as e'er I had beheld—in front,  
The sea lay laughing at a distance ; near,  
The solid mountains shone, bright as the clouds,  
Grain-tinctured, drenched in empyrean light ;  
And in the meadows and the lower grounds  
Was all the sweetness of a common dawn—  
Dews, vapours, and the melody of birds,  
And labourers going forth to till the fields.  
Ah ! need I say, dear Friend ! that to the brim  
My heart was full ; I made no vows, but vows  
Were then made for me ; bond unknown to me  
Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,  
A dedicated Spirit. On I walked  
In thankful blessedness, which yet survives.

Strange rendezvous ! My mind was at that time  
A parti-coloured show of grave and gay,  
Solid and light, short-sighted and profound ;  
Of inconsiderate habits and sedate,  
Consorting in one mansion unimproved.  
The worth I knew of powers that I possessed,  
Though slighted and too oft misused. Besides,  
That summer, swarming as it did with thoughts  
Transient and idle, lacked not intervals  
When Folly from the frown of fleeting Time  
Shrunk, and the mind experienced in herself  
Conformity as just as that of old  
To the end and written spirit of God's works,  
Whether held forth in Nature or in Man,  
Through pregnant vision, separate or conjoined.

When from our better selves we have too long  
Been parted by the hurrying world, and droop,  
Sick of its business, of its pleasures tired,

How gracious, how benign, is Solitude ;  
How potent a mere image of her sway ;  
Most potent when impressed upon the mind  
With an appropriate human centre—hermit,  
Deep in the bosom of the wilderness ;  
Votary (in vast cathedral, where no foot  
Is treading, where no other face is seen)  
Kneeling at prayers ; or watchman on the top  
Of lighthouse, beaten by Atlantic waves ;  
Or as the soul of that great Power is met  
Sometimes embodied on a public road,  
When, for the night deserted, it assumes  
A character of quiet more profound  
Than pathless wastes.

Once, when those summer months  
Were flown, and autumn brought its annual show  
Of oars with oars contending, sails with sails,  
Upon Winander's spacious breast, it chanced  
That—after I had left a flower-decked room  
(Whose in-door pastime, lighted up, survived  
To a late hour), and spirits overwrought  
Were making night do penance for a day  
Spent in a round of strenuous idleness—  
My homeward course led up a long ascent,  
Where the road's watery surface, to the top  
Of that sharp rising, glittered to the moon  
And bore the semblance of another stream  
Stealing with silent lapse to join the brook  
That murmured in the vale. All else was still ;  
No living thing appeared in earth or air,  
And, save the flowing water's peaceful voice,  
Sound there was none—but, lo ! an uncouth shape,  
Shown by a sudden turning of the road,  
So near that, slipping back into the shade  
Of a thick hawthorn, I could mark him well,  
Myself unseen. He was of stature tall,  
A span above man's common measure, tall,  
Stiff, lank, and upright ; a more meagre man  
Was never seen before by night or day.  
Long were his arms, pallid his hands ; his mouth  
Looked ghastly in the moonlight : from behind,  
A mile-stone propped him ; I could also ken  
That he was clothed in military garb,  
Though faded, yet entire. Companionless,  
No dog attending, by no staff sustained,

He stood, and in his very dress appeared  
A desolation, a simplicity,  
To which the trappings of a gaudy world  
Make a strange back-ground. From his lips, ere long,  
Issued low muttered sounds, as if of pain  
Or some uneasy thought; yet still his form  
Kept the same awful steadiness—at his feet  
His shadow lay, and moved not. From self-blame  
Not wholly free, I watched him thus; at length  
Subduing my heart's specious cowardice,  
I left the shady nook where I had stood  
And hailed him. Slowly from his resting-place  
He rose, and with a lean and wasted arm  
In measured gesture lifted to his head  
Returned my salutation; then resumed  
His station as before; and when I asked  
His history, the veteran, in reply,  
Was neither slow nor eager; but, unmoved,  
And with a quiet uncomplaining voice,  
A stately air of mild indifference,  
He told in few plain words a soldier's tale—  
That in the Tropic Islands he had served,  
Whence he had landed scarcely three weeks past;  
That on his landing he had been dismissed,  
And now was travelling towards his native home.  
This heard, I said, in pity, "Come with me."  
He stooped, and straightway from the ground took up  
An oaken staff by me yet unobserved—  
A staff which must have dropped from his slack hand  
And lay till now neglected in the grass.  
Though weak his step and cautious, he appeared  
To travel without pain, and I beheld,  
With an astonishment but ill suppressed,  
His ghostly figure moving at my side;  
Nor could I, while we journeyed thus, forbear  
To turn from present hardships to the past,  
And speak of war, battle, and pestilence,  
Sprinkling this talk with questions, better spared,  
On what he might himself have seen or felt.  
He all the while was in demeanour calm,  
Concise in answer; solemn and sublime  
He might have seemed, but that in all he said  
There was a strange half-absence, as of one  
Knowing too well the importance of his theme,  
But feeling it no longer. Our discourse

Soon ended, and together on we passed  
 In silence through a wood gloomy and still.  
 Up-turning, then, along an open field,  
 We reached a cottage. At the door I knocked,  
 And earnestly to charitable care  
 Commended him as a poor friendless man,  
 Belated and by sickness overcome.  
 Assured that now the traveller would repose  
*In comfort, I entreated that henceforth*  
 He would not linger in the public ways,  
 And ask for timely furtherance and help  
 Such as his state required. At this reproof,  
 With the same ghastly mildness in his look,  
 He said, "My trust is in the God of Heaven,  
 And in the eye of him who passes me!"

The cottage door was speedily unbarred,  
 And now the soldier touched his hat once more  
 With his lean hand, and in a faltering voice,  
 Whose tone bespoke reviving interests  
 Till then unfelt, he thanked me; I returned  
 The farewell blessing of the patient man,  
 And so we parted. Back I cast a look,  
 And lingered near the door a little space,  
 Then sought with quiet heart my distant home.

## BOOK FIFTH

## BOOKS

WHEN Contemplation, like the night-calm felt  
 Through earth and sky, spreads widely, and sends deep  
 Into the soul its tranquillising power,  
 Even then I sometimes grieve for thee, O Man,  
 Earth's paramount Creature! not so much for woes  
 That thou endurest; heavy though that weight be,  
 Cloud-like it mounts, or touched with light divine  
 Doth melt away; but for those palms achieved  
 Through length of time, by patient exercise  
 Of study and hard thought; there, there, it is  
 That sadness finds its fuel. Hitherto,  
 In progress through this Verse, my mind hath looked  
 Upon the speaking face of earth and heaven  
 As her prime teacher, intercourse with man  
 Established by the sovereign Intellect,  
 Who through that bodily image hath diffused,

As might appear to the eye of fleeting time,  
A deathless spirit. Thou also, man ! hast wrought,  
For commerce of thy nature with herself,  
Things that aspire to unconquerable life ;  
And yet we feel—we cannot choose but feel—  
That they must perish. Tremblings of the heart  
It gives, to think that our immortal being  
No more shall need such garments ; and yet man,  
As long as he shall be the child of earth,  
Might almost " weep to have " what he may lose,  
Nor be himself extinguished, but survive,  
Abject, depressed, forlorn, disconsolate.  
A thought is with me sometimes, and I say,—  
Should the whole frame of earth by inward throes  
Be wrenched, or fire come down from far to scorch  
Her pleasant habitations, and dry up  
Old Ocean, in his bed left singed and bare,  
Yet would the living Presence still subsist  
Victorious, and composure would ensue,  
And kindlings like the morning—presage sure  
Of day returning and of life revived.  
But all the meditations of mankind,  
Yea, all the adamantine holds of truth  
By reason built, or passion, which itself  
Is highest reason in a soul sublime ;  
The consecrated works of Bard and Sage,  
Sensuous or intellectual, wrought by men,  
Twin labourers and heirs of the same hopes ;  
Where would they be ? Oh ! why hath not the Mind  
Some element to stamp her image on  
In nature somewhat nearer to her own ?  
Why, gifted with such powers to send abroad  
Her spirit, must it lodge in shrines so frail ?

One day, when from my lips a like complaint  
Had fallen in presence of a studious friend,  
He with a smile made answer, that in truth  
'Twas going far to seek disquietude ;  
*But on the front of his reproof confessed*  
That he himself had oftentimes given way  
To kindred hauntings. Whereupon I told,  
That once in the stillness of a summer's noon,  
While I was seated in a rocky cave  
By the sea-side, perusing, so it chanced,  
The famous history of the errant knight

Recorded by Cervantes, these same thoughts  
Beset me, and to height unusual rose,  
While listlessly I sate, and, having closed  
The book, had turned my eyes toward the wide sea.  
On poetry and geometric truth,  
And their high privilege of lasting life  
From all internal injury exempt,  
I mused ; upon these chiefly : and at length,  
My senses yielding to the sultry air,  
Sleep seized me, and I passed into a dream.  
I saw before me stretched a boundless plain  
Of sandy wilderness, all black and void,  
And as I looked around, distress and fear  
Came creeping over me, when at my side,  
Close at my side, an uncouth shape appeared  
Upon a dromedary, mounted high.  
He seemed an Arab of the Bedouin tribes :  
A lance he bore, and underneath one arm  
A stone, and in the opposite hand a shell  
Of a surpassing brightness. At the sight  
Much I rejoiced, not doubting but a guide  
Was present, one who with unerring skill  
Would through the desert lead me ; and while yet  
I looked and looked, self-questioned what this freight  
Which the new-comer carried through the waste  
Could mean, the Arab told me that the stone  
(To give it in the language of the dream)  
Was "Euclid's Elements," and "This," said he,  
"Is something of more worth ;" and at the word  
Stretched forth the shell, so beautiful in shape,  
In colour so resplendent, with command  
That I should hold it to my ear. I did so,  
And heard that instant in an unknown tongue,  
Which yet I understood, articulate sounds,  
A loud prophetic blast of harmony ;  
An Ode, in passion uttered, which foretold  
Destruction to the children of the earth  
By deluge, now at hand. No sooner ceased  
The song, than the Arab with calm look declared  
That all would come to pass of which the voice  
Had given forewarning, and that he himself  
Was going then to bury those two books :  
The one that held acquaintance with the stars,  
And wedded soul to soul in purest bond  
Of reason, undisturbed by space or time ;

The other that was a god, yea many gods,  
Had voices more than all the winds, with power  
To exhilarate the spirit, and to soothe,  
Through every clime, the heart of human kind.  
While this was uttering, strange as it may seem,  
I wondered not, although I plainly saw  
The one to be a stone, the other a shell ;  
Nor doubted once but that they both were books,  
Having a perfect faith in all that passed.  
Far stronger, now, grew the desire I felt  
To cleave unto this man ; but when I prayed  
To share his enterprise, he hurried on  
Reckless of me : I followed, not unseen,  
For oftentimes he cast a backward look,  
Grasping his twofold treasure.—Lance in rest,  
He rode, I keeping pace with him ; and now  
He, to my fancy, had become the knight  
Whose tale Cervantes tells ; yet not the knight,  
But was an Arab of the desert too ;  
Of these was neither, and was both at once.  
His countenance, meanwhile, grew more disturbed ;  
And, looking backwards when he looked, mine eyes  
Saw, over half the wilderness diffused,  
A bed of glittering light : I asked the cause :  
" It is," said he, " the waters of the deep  
Gathering upon us ; " quickening then the pace  
Of the unwieldy creature he bestrode,  
He left me : I called after him aloud ;  
He heeded not ; but, with his twofold charge  
Still in his grasp, before me, full in view,  
Went hurrying o'er the illimitable waste,  
With the fleet waters of a drowning world  
In chase of him ; whereat I waked in terror,  
And saw the sea before me, and the book,  
In which I had been reading, at my side.

Full often, taking from the world of sleep  
This Arab phantom, which I thus beheld,  
This semi-Quixote, I to him have given  
A substance, fancied him a living man,  
A gentle dweller in the desert, crazed  
By love and feeling, and internal thought  
Protracted among endless solitudes ;  
Have shaped him wandering upon this quest :  
Nor have I pitied him ; but rather felt

Reverence was due to a being thus employed ;  
 And thought that, in the blind and awful lair  
 Of such a madness, reason did lie couched.  
 Enow there are on earth to take in charge  
 Their wives, their children, and their virgin loves,  
 Or whatsoever else the heart holds dear ;  
 Enow to stir for these ; yea, will I say,  
 Contemplating in soberness the approach  
 Of an event so dire, by signs in earth  
 Or heaven made manifest, that I could share  
 That maniac's fond anxiety, and go  
 Upon like errand. Oftentimes at least  
 Me hath such strong entrancement overcome,  
 When I have held a volume in my hand,  
 Poor earthly casket of immortal verse,  
 Shakespeare, or Milton, labourers divine !

Great and benign, indeed, must be the power  
 Of living nature, which could thus so long  
 Detain me from the best of other guides  
 And dearest helpers, left unthanked, unpraised,  
 Even in the time of lisping infancy ;  
 And later down, in prattling childhood even,  
 While I was travelling back among those days,  
 How could I ever play an ingrate's part ?  
 Once more should I have made those bowers resound,  
 By intermingling strains of thankfulness  
 With their own thoughtless melodies ; at least  
 It might have well beseemed me to repeat  
 Some simply fashioned tale, to tell again,  
 In slender accents of sweet verse, some tale  
 That did bewitch me then, and soothes me now.  
 O Friend ! O Poet ! brother of my soul,  
 Think not that I could pass along untouched  
 By these remembrances. Yet wherefore speak ?  
 Why call upon a few weak words to say  
 What is already written in the hearts  
 Of all that breathe ?—what in the path of all  
 Drops daily from the tongue of every child,  
 Wherever man is found ? The trickling tear  
 Upon the cheek of listening Infancy  
 Proclaims it, and the insuperable look  
 That drinks as if it never could be full.

That portion of my story I shall leave  
 There registered : whatever else of power

Or pleasure sown, or fostered thus, may be  
Peculiar to myself, let that remain  
Where still it works, though hidden from all search  
Among the depths of time. Yet is it just  
That here, in memory of all books which lay  
Their sure foundations in the heart of man,  
Whether by native prose, or numerous verse,  
That in the name of all inspired souls—  
From Homer the great Thunderer, from the voice  
That roars along the bed of Jewish song,  
And that more varied and elaborate,  
Those trumpet-tones of harmony that shake  
Our shores in England,—from those loftiest notes  
Down to the low and wren-like warblings, made  
For cottagers and spinners at the wheel,  
And sun-burnt travellers resting their tired limbs,  
Stretched under wayside hedge-rows, ballad tunes,  
Food for the hungry ears of little ones,  
And of old men who have survived their joys—  
'Tis just that in behalf of these, the works,  
And of the men that framed them, whether known  
Or sleeping nameless in their scattered graves,  
That I should here assert their rights, attest  
Their honours, and should, once for all, pronounce  
Their benediction; speak of them as Powers  
For ever to be hallowed; only less,  
For what we are and what we may become,  
Than Nature's self, which is the breath of God,  
Or His pure Word by miracle revealed.

Rarely and with reluctance would I stoop  
To transitory themes; yet I rejoice,  
And, by these thoughts admonished, will pour out  
Thanks with uplifted heart, that I was reared  
Safe from an evil which these days have laid  
Upon the children of the land, a pest  
That might have dried me up, body and soul.  
This verse is dedicate to Nature's self,  
And things that teach as Nature teaches: then,  
Oh! where had been the Man, the Poet where,  
Where had we been, we two, beloved Friend!  
If in the season of unperilous choice,  
In lieu of wandering, as we did, through vales  
Rich with indigenous produce, open ground  
Of Fancy, happy pastures ranged at will,

We had been followed, hourly watched, and noosed,  
Each in his several melancholy walk  
Stringed like a poor man's heifer at its feed,  
Led through the lanes in forlorn servitude ;  
Or rather like a stalled ox debarred  
From touch of growing grass, that may not taste  
A flower till it have yielded up its sweets  
A prelibation to the mower's scythe.

Behold the parent hen amid her brood,  
Though fledged and feathered, and well pleased to part  
And straggle from her presence, still a brood,  
And she herself from the maternal bond  
Still undischarged ; yet doth she little more  
Than move with them in tenderness and love,  
A centre to the circle which they make ;  
And now and then, alike from need of theirs  
And call of her own natural appetites,  
She scratches, ransacks up the earth for food,  
Which they partake at pleasure. Early died  
My honoured Mother, she who was the heart  
And hinge of all our learnings and our loves :  
She left us destitute, and, as we might,  
Trooping together. Little suits it me  
To break upon the sabbath of her rest  
With any thought that looks at others' blame ;  
Nor would I praise her but in perfect love.  
Hence am I checked : but let me boldly say,  
In gratitude, and for the sake of truth,  
Unheard by her, that she, not falsely taught,  
Fetching her goodness rather from times past,  
Than shaping novelties for times to come,  
Had no presumption, no such jealousy,  
Nor did by habit of her thoughts mistrust  
Our nature, but had virtual faith that He  
Who fills the mother's breast with innocent milk,  
Doth also for our nobler part provide,  
Under His great correction and control,  
As innocent instincts, and as innocent food ;  
Or draws, for minds that are left free to trust  
In the simplicities of opening life,  
Sweet honey out of spurned or dreaded weeds.  
This was her creed, and therefore she was pure  
From anxious fear of error or mishap,  
And evil, overweeningly so called ;

Was not puffed up by false unnatural hopes,  
Nor selfish with unnecessary cares,  
Nor with impatience from the season asked  
More than its timely produce; rather loved  
The hours for what they are, than from regard  
Glanced on their promises in restless pride.  
Such was she—not from faculties more strong  
Than others have, but from the times, perhaps,  
And spot in which she lived, and through a grace  
Of modest meekness, simple-mindedness,  
A heart that found benignity and hope,  
Being itself benign.

My drift I fear  
Is scarcely obvious; but, that common sense  
May try this modern system by its fruits,  
Leave let me take to place before her sight  
A specimen pourtrayed with faithful hand.  
Full early trained to worship seemliness,  
This model of a child is never known  
To mix in quarrels; that were far beneath  
Its dignity; with gifts he bubbles o'er  
*As generous as a fountain; selfishness*  
May not come near him, nor the little throng  
Of flitting pleasures tempt him from his path;  
The wandering beggars propagate his name,  
Dumb creatures find him tender as a nun,  
And natural or supernatural fear,  
Unless it leap upon him in a dream,  
Touches him not. To enhance the wonder, see  
How arch his notices, how nice his sense  
Of the ridiculous; not blind is he  
To the broad follies of the licensed world,  
Yet innocent himself withal, though shrewd,  
And can read lectures upon innocence;  
A miracle of scientific lore,  
Ships he can guide across the pathless sea,  
And tell you all their cunning; he can read  
The inside of the earth, and spell the stars;  
He knows the policies of foreign lands;  
Can string you names of districts, cities, towns,  
The whole world over, tight as beads of dew  
Upon a gossamer thread; he sifts, he weighs;  
All things are put to question; he must live  
Knowing that he grows wiser every day  
Or else not live at all, and seeing too

Each little drop of wisdom as it falls  
 Into the dimpling cistern of his heart :  
 For this unnatural growth the trainer blame,  
 Pity the tree. — Poor human vanity,  
 Wert thou extinguished, little would be left  
 Which he could truly love ; but how escape ?  
 For, ever as a thought of purer birth  
 Rises to lead him toward a better clime,  
*Some intermeddler still is on the watch*  
 To drive him back, and pound him, like a stray,  
 Within the pinfold of his own conceit.  
 Meanwhile old grandame earth is grieved to find  
 The playthings, which her love designed for him,  
 Unthought of : in their woodland beds the flowers  
 Weep, and the river sides are all forlorn.  
 Oh ! give us once again the wishing-cap  
 Of Fortunatus, and the invisible coat  
 Of Jack the Giant-killer, Robin Hood,  
 And Sabra in the forest with St. George !  
 The child, whose love is here, at least, doth reap  
 One precious gain, that he forgets himself.

These mighty workmen of our later age,  
 Who, with a broad highway, have overbridged  
 The froward chaos of futurity,  
 Tamed to their bidding ; they who have the skill  
 To manage books, and things, and make them act  
 On infant minds as surely as the sun  
 Deals with a flower ; the keepers of our time,  
 The guides and wardens of our faculties,  
 Sages who in their prescience would control  
 All accidents, and to the very road  
 Which they have fashioned would confine us down  
 Like engines ; when will their presumption learn,  
 That in the unreasoning progress of the world  
 A wiser spirit is at work for us,  
 A better eye than theirs, most prodigal  
 Of blessings, and most studious of our good,  
 Even in what seem our most unfruitful hours ?

There was a Boy : ye knew him well, ye cliffs  
 And islands of Winander ! — many a time  
 At evening, when the earliest stars began  
 To move along the edges of the hills,  
 Rising or setting, would he stand alone

Beneath the trees or by the glimmering lake,  
And there, with fingers interwoven, both hands  
Pressed closely palm to palm, and to his mouth  
Uplifted, he, as through an instrument,  
Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls,  
That they might answer him ; and they would shout  
Across the watery vale, and shout again,  
Responsive to his call, with quivering peals,  
And long halloos and screams, and echoes loud,  
Redoubled and redoubled, concourse wild  
Of jocund din ; and, when a lengthened pause  
Of silence came and baffled his best skill,  
Then sometimes, in that silence while he hung  
Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise  
Has carried far into his heart the voice  
Of mountain torrents ; or the visible scene  
Would enter unawares into his mind,  
With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,  
Its woods, and that uncertain heaven, received  
Into the bosom of the steady lake.

This Boy was taken from his mates, and died  
In childhood, ere he was full twelve years old.  
Fair is the spot, most beautiful the vale  
Where he was born ; the grassy churchyard hangs  
Upon a slope above the village school,  
And through that churchyard when my way has led  
On summer evenings, I believe that there  
A long half hour together I have stood  
Mute, looking at the grave in which he lies !  
Even now appears before the mind's clear eye  
That self-same village church ; I see her sit  
(The thronèd Lady whom erewhile we hailed)  
On her green hill, forgetful of this Boy  
Who slumbers at her feet,—forgetful, too,  
Of all her silent neighbourhood of graves,  
And listening only to the gladsome sounds  
That, from the rural school ascending, play  
Beneath her and about her. May she long  
Behold a race of young ones like to those  
With whom I herded !—(easily, indeed,  
We might have fed upon a fatter soil  
Of arts and letters—but be that forgiven)—  
A race of real children ; not too wise,  
Too learned, or too good : but wanton, fresh,

And bandied up and down by love and hate ;  
 Not unresentful where self-justified ;  
 Fierce, moody, patient, venturous, modest, shy ;  
 Mad at their sports like withered leaves in winds ;  
 Though doing wrong and suffering, and full of  
 Bending beneath our life's mysterious weight  
 Of pain, and doubt, and fear, yet yielding not  
 In happiness to the happiest upon earth.  
 Simplicity in habit, truth in speech,  
 Be these the daily strengtheners of their minds ;  
 May books and Nature be their early joy !  
 And knowledge, rightly honoured with that name—  
 Knowledge not purchased by the loss of power !

Well do I call to mind the very week  
 When I was first intrusted to the care  
 Of that sweet Valley ; when its paths, its shores,  
 And brooks were like a dream of novelty  
 To my half-infant thoughts ; that very week,  
 While I was roving up and down alone,  
 Seeking I knew not what, I chanced to cross  
 One of those open fields, which, shaped like ears,  
 Make green peninsulas on Esthwaite's Lake :  
 Twilight was coming on, yet through the gloom  
 Appeared distinctly on the opposite shore  
 A heap of garments, as if left by one  
 Who might have there been bathing. Long I watched,  
 But no one owned them ; meanwhile the calm lake  
 Grew dark with all the shadows on its breast,  
 And, now and then, a fish up-leaping snapped  
 The breathless stillness. The succeeding day,  
 Those unclaimed garments telling a plain tale  
 Drew to the spot an anxious crowd ; some looked  
 In passive expectation from the shore,  
 While from a boat others hung o'er the deep,  
 Sounding with grappling irons and long poles.  
 At last, the dead man, 'mid that beauteous scene  
 Of trees and hills and water, bolt upright  
 Rose, with his ghastly face, a spectre shape  
 Of terror ; yet no soul-debasing fear,  
 Young as I was, a child not nine years old,  
 Possessed me, for my inner eye had seen  
 Such sights before, among the shining streams  
 Of faëry land, the forest of romance.  
 Their spirit hallowed the sad spectacle

With decoration of ideal grace ;  
A dignity, a smoothness, like the works  
Of Grecian art, and purest poesy.

A precious treasure had I long possessed,  
A little yellow, canvas-covered book,  
A slender abstract of the Arabian tales ;  
And, from companions in a new abode,  
When first I learnt, that this dear prize of mine  
Was but a block hewn from a mighty quarry—  
That there were four large volumes, laden all  
With kindred matter, 'twas to me, in truth,  
A promise scarcely earthly. Instantly,  
With one not richer than myself, I made  
A covenant that each should lay aside  
The moneys he possessed, and hoard up more,  
Till our joint savings had amassed enough  
To make this book our own. Through several months,  
In spite of all temptation, we preserved  
Religiously that vow ; but firmness failed,  
Nor were we ever masters of our wish.

And when thereafter to my father's house  
The holidays returned me, there to find  
That golden store of books which I had left,  
What joy was mine ! How often in the course  
Of those glad respites, though a soft west wind  
Ruffled the waters to the angler's wish,  
For a whole day together, have I lain  
Down by thy side, O Derwent ! murmuring stream,  
On the hot stones, and in the glaring sun,  
And there have read, devouring as I read,  
Defrauding the day's glory, desperate !  
Till with a sudden bound of smart reproach,  
Such as an idler deals with in his shame,  
I to the sport betook myself again.

A gracious spirit o'er this earth presides,  
And o'er the heart of man ; invisibly  
It comes, to works of unproved delight,  
And tendency benign, directing those  
Who care not, know not, think not, what they do.  
The tales that charm away the wakeful night  
In Araby, romances ; legends penned  
For solace by dim light of monkish lamps ;  
Fictions, for ladies of their love, devised

By youthful squires ; adventures endless, spun  
 By the dismantled warrior in old age,  
 Out of the bowels of those very schemes  
 In which his youth did first extravagate ;  
 These spread like day, and something in the shape  
 Of these will live till man shall be no more.  
 Dumb yearnings, hidden appetites, are ours,  
 And *they must* have their food. Our childhood sits,  
 Our simple childhood, sits upon a throne  
 That hath more power than all the elements.  
 I guess not what this tells of Being past,  
 Nor what it augurs of the life to come ;  
 But so it is ; and, in that dubious hour—  
 That twilight—when we first begin to see  
 This dawning earth, to recognise, expect,  
 And, in the long probation that ensues,  
 The time of trial, ere we learn to live  
 In reconcilment with our stinted powers ;  
 To endure this state of meagre vassalage,  
 Unwilling to forego, confess, submit,  
 Uneasy and unsettled, yoke-fellows  
 To custom, mettlesome, and not yet tamed  
 And humbled down—oh ! then we feel, we feel,  
 We know where we have friends. Ye dreamers, then,  
 Forgers of daring tales ! we bless you then,  
 Impostors, drivellers, dotards, as the ape  
 Philosophy will call you : *then* we feel  
 With what, and how great might ye are in league,  
 Who make our wish, our power, our thought : a deed,  
 An empire, a possession,—ye whom time  
 And seasons serve ; all Faculties to whom  
 Earth crouches, the elements are potter's clay,  
 Space like a heaven filled up with northern lights,  
 Here, nowhere, there, and everywhere at once.

Relinquishing this lofty eminence  
 For ground, though humbler, not the less a tract  
 Of the same isthmus, which our spirits cross  
 In progress from their native continent  
 To earth and human life, the Song might dwell  
 On that delightful time of growing youth,  
 When craving for the marvellous gives way  
 To strengthening love for things that we have seen ;  
 When sober truth and steady sympathies,  
 Offered to notice by less daring pens,

Take firmer hold of us, and words themselves  
Move us with conscious pleasure.

I am sad

At thought of rapture now for ever flown ;  
Almost to tears I sometimes could be sad  
To think of, to read over, many a page,  
Poems withal of name, which at that time  
Did never fail to entrance me, and are now  
Dead in my eyes, dead as a theatre  
Fresh emptied of spectators. Twice five years  
Or less I might have seen, when first my mind  
With conscious pleasure opened to the charm  
Of words in tuneful order, found them sweet  
For their own *sakes*, a passion, and a power ;  
And phrases pleased me chosen for delight,  
For pomp, or love. Oft, in the public roads  
Yet unfrequented, while the morning light  
Was yellowing the hill tops, I went abroad  
With a dear friend, and for the better part  
Of two delightful hours we strolled along  
By the still borders of the misty lake,  
Repeating favourite verses with one voice,  
Or conning more, as happy as the birds  
That round us chaunted. Well might we be glad,  
Lifted above the ground by airy fancies,  
More bright than madness or the dreams of wine ;  
And, though full oft the objects of our love  
Were false, and in their splendour overwrought,  
Yet was there surely then no vulgar power  
Working within us,—nothing less, in truth,  
Than that most noble attribute of man,  
Though yet untutored and inordinate,  
That wish for something loftier, more adorned,  
Than is the common aspect, daily garb,  
Of human life. What wonder, then, if sounds  
Of exultation echoed through the groves !  
For, images, and sentiments, and words,  
And everything encountered or pursued  
In that delicious world of poesy,  
Kept holiday, a never-ending show,  
With music, incense, festival, and flowers !

Here must we pause : this only let me add,  
From heart-experience, and in humblest sense  
Of modesty, that he, who in his youth

A daily wanderer among woods and fields  
 With living Nature hath been intimate,  
 Not only in that raw unpractised time  
 Is stirred to ecstasy, as others are,  
 By glittering verse ; but further, doth receive,  
 In measure only dealt out to himself,  
 Knowledge and increase of enduring joy  
 From the great Nature that exists in works  
 Of mighty Poets. Visionary power  
 Attends the motions of the viewless winds,  
 Embodied in the mystery of words :  
 There, darkness makes abode, and all the host  
 Of shadowy things work endless changes,—there,  
 As in a mansion like their proper home,  
 Even forms and substances are circumfused  
 By that transparent veil with light divine,  
 And, through the turnings intricate of verse,  
 Present themselves as objects recognised,  
 In flashes, and with glory not their own.

## BOOK SIXTH

## CAMBRIDGE AND THE ALPS

THE leaves were fading when to Esthwaite's banks  
 And the simplicities of cottage life  
 I bade farewell ; and, one among the youth  
 Who, summoned by that season, reunite  
 As scattered birds troop to the fowler's lure,  
 Went back to Granta's cloisters, not so prompt  
 Or eager, though as gay and undepressed  
 In mind, as when I thence had taken flight  
 A few short months before. I turned my face  
 Without repining from the coves and heights  
 Clothed in the sunshine of the withering fern ;  
 Quitted, not loth, the mild magnificence  
 Of calmer lakes and louder streams ; and you,  
 Frank-hearted maids of rocky Cumberland,  
 You and your not unwelcome days of mirth,  
 Relinquished, and your nights of revelry,  
 And in my own unlovely cell sate down  
 In lightsome mood—such privilege has youth  
 That cannot take long leave of pleasant thoughts.

The bonds of indolent society  
 Relaxing in their hold, henceforth I lived

More to myself. Two winters may be passed  
Without a separate notice : many books  
Were skimmed, devoured, or studiously perused,  
But with no settled plan. I was detached  
Internally from academic cares ;  
Yet independent study seemed a course  
Of hardy disobedience toward friends  
And kindred, proud rebellion and unkind.  
This spurious virtue, rather let it bear  
A name it now deserves, this cowardice,  
Gave treacherous sanction to that over-love  
Of freedom which encouraged me to turn  
From regulations even of my own  
As from restraints and bonds. Yet who can tell—  
Who knows what thus may have been gained, both then  
And at a later season, or preserved ;  
What love of nature, what original strength  
Of contemplation, what intuitive truths  
The deepest and the best, what keen research,  
Unbiased, unbewildered, and unawed ?

The Poet's soul was with me at that time ;  
Sweet meditations, the still overflow  
Of present happiness, while future years  
Lacked not anticipations, tender dreams,  
No few of which have since been realised ;  
And some remain, hopes for my future life.  
Four years and thirty, told this very week,  
Have I been now a sojourner on earth,  
By sorrow not unsmiten ; yet for me  
Life's morning radiance hath not left the hills,  
Her dew is on the flowers. Those were the days  
Which also first emboldened me to trust  
With firmness, hitherto but slightly touched  
By such a daring thought, that I might leave  
Some monument behind me which pure hearts  
Should reverence. The instinctive humbleness,  
Maintained even by the very name and thought  
Of printed books and authorship, began  
To melt away ; and further, the dread awe  
Of mighty names was softened down and seemed  
Approachable, admitting fellowship  
Of modest sympathy. Such aspect now,  
Though not familiarly, my mind put on,  
Content to observe, to achieve, and to enjoy.

All winter long, whenever free to choose,  
Did I by night frequent the College grove  
And tributary walks ; the last, and oft  
The only one, who had been lingering there  
Through hours of silence, till the porter's bell,  
A punctual follower on the stroke of nine,  
Rang with its blunt unceremonious voice ;  
Inexorable summons ! Lofty elms,  
Inviting shades of opportune recess,  
Bestowed composure on a neighbourhood  
Unpeaceful in itself. A single tree  
With sinuous trunk, boughs exquisitely wreathed,  
Grew there ; an ash which Winter for himself  
Decked out with pride, and with outlandish grace :  
Up from the ground, and almost to the top,  
The trunk and every master branch were green  
With clustering ivy, and the lightsome twigs  
And outer spray profusely tipped with seeds  
That hung in yellow tassels, while the air  
Stirred them, not voiceless. Often have I stood  
Foot-bound uplooking at this lovely tree  
Beneath a frosty moon. The hemisphere  
Of magic fiction, verse of mine perchance  
May never tread ; but scarcely Spenser's self  
Could have more tranquil visions in his youth,  
Or could more bright appearances create  
Of human forms with superhuman powers,  
Than I beheld, loitering on calm clear nights  
Alone, beneath this fairy work of earth.

On the vague reading of a truant youth  
'Twere idle to descant. My inner judgment  
Not seldom differed from my taste in books,  
As if it appertained to another mind,  
And yet the books which then I valued most  
Are dearest to me *now* ; for, having scanned,  
Not heedlessly, the laws, and watched the forms  
Of Nature, in that knowledge I possessed  
A standard, often usefully applied,  
Even when unconsciously, to things removed  
From a familiar sympathy.—In fine,  
I was a better judge of thoughts than words,  
Misled in estimating words, not only  
By common inexperience of youth,  
But by the trade in classic niceties,

The dangerous craft, of culling term and phrase  
From languages that want the living voice  
To carry meaning to the natural heart ;  
To tell us what is passion, what is truth,  
What reason, what simplicity and sense.

Yet may we not entirely overlook  
The pleasure gathered from the rudiments  
Of geometric science. Though advanced  
In these enquiries, with regret I speak,  
No farther than the threshold, there I found  
Both elevation and composed delight :  
With Indian awe and wonder, ignorance pleased  
With its own struggles, did I meditate  
On the relation those abstractions bear  
To Nature's laws, and by what process led,  
Those immaterial agents bowed their heads  
Duly to serve the mind of earth-born man ;  
From star to star, from kindred sphere to sphere,  
From system on to system without end.

More frequently from the same source I drew  
A pleasure quiet and profound, a sense  
Of permanent and universal sway,  
And paramount belief ; there, recognised  
A type, for finite natures, of the one  
Supreme Existence, the surpassing life  
Which—to the boundaries of space and time,  
Of melancholy space and doleful time,  
Superior and incapable of change,  
Nor touched by welterings of passion—is,  
And hath the name of, God. Transcendent peace  
And silence did await upon these thoughts  
That were a frequent comfort to my youth.

'Tis told by one whom stormy waters threw,  
With fellow-sufferers by the shipwreck spared,  
Upon a desert coast, that having brought  
To land a single volume, saved by chance,  
A treatise of Geometry, he wont,  
Although of food and clothing destitute,  
And beyond common wretchedness depressed,  
To part from company and take this book  
(Then first a self-taught pupil in its truths)  
To spots remote, and draw his diagrams  
With a long staff upon the sand, and thus

Did oft beguile his sorrow, and almost  
 Forget his feeling : so (if like effect  
 From the same cause produced, 'mid outward things  
 So different, may rightly be compared),  
 So was it then with me, and so will be  
 With Poets ever. Mighty is the charm  
 Of those abstractions to a mind beset  
 With images and haunted by herself,  
 And specially delightful unto me  
 Was that clear synthesis built up aloft  
 So gracefully ; even then when it appeared  
 Not more than a mere plaything, or a toy  
 To sense embodied : not the thing it is  
 In verity, an independent world,  
 Created out of pure intelligence.

Such dispositions then were mine unearned  
 By aught, I fear, of genuine desert—  
 Mine, through heaven's grace and inborn aptitudes,  
 And not to leave the story of that time  
 Imperfect, with these habits must be joined,  
 Moods melancholy, fits of spleen, that loved  
 A pensive sky, sad days, and piping winds,  
 The twilight more than dawn, autumn than spring ;  
 A treasured and luxurious gloom of choice  
 And inclination mainly, and the mere  
 Redundancy of youth's contentedness.  
 —To time thus spent, add multitudes of hours  
 Pilfered away, by what the Bard who sang  
 Of the Enchanter Indolence hath called  
 "Good-natured lounging," and behold a map  
 Of my collegiate life—far less intense  
 Than duty called for, or, without regard  
 To duty, *might* have sprung up of itself  
 By change of accidents, or even, to speak  
 Without unkindness, in another place.  
 Yet why take refuge in that plea?—the fault,  
 This I repeat, was mine ; mine be the blame.

In summer, making quest for works of art,  
 Or scenes renowned for beauty, I explored  
 That streamlet whose blue current works its way  
 Between romantic Dovedale's spiry rocks ;  
 Pried into Yorkshire dales, or hidden tracts  
 Of my own native region, and was blest

Between these sundry wanderings with a joy  
Above all joys, that seemed another morn  
Risen on mid noon ; blest with the presence, Friend  
Of that sole Sister, her who hath been long  
Dear to thee also, thy true friend and mine,  
Now, after separation desolate,  
Restored to me—such absence that she seemed  
A gift then first bestowed. The varied banks  
Of Emont, hitherto unnamed in song,  
And that monastic castle, 'mid tall trees,  
Low standing by the margin of the stream,  
A mansion visited (as fame reports)  
By Sidney, where, in sight of our Helvellyn,  
Or stormy Cross-fell, snatches he might pen  
Of his Arcadia, by fraternal love  
Inspired ;—that river and those mouldering towers  
Have seen us side by side, when, having clomb  
The darksome windings of a broken stair,  
And crept along a ridge of fractured wall,  
Not without trembling, we in safety looked  
Forth, through some Gothic window's open space,  
And gathered with one mind a rich reward  
From the far-stretching landscape, by the light  
Of morning beautified, or purple eve ;  
Or, not less pleased, lay on some turret's head,  
Catching from tufts of grass and hare-bell flowers  
Their faintest whisper to the passing breeze,  
Given out while mid-day heat oppressed the plains

Another maid there was, who also shed  
A gladness o'er that season, then to me,  
By her exulting outside look of youth  
And placid under-countenance, first endeared ;  
That other spirit, Coleridge ! who is now  
So near to us, that meek confiding heart,  
So revered by us both. O'er paths and fields  
In all that neighbourhood, through narrow lanes  
Of eglantine, and through the shady woods,  
And o'er the Border Beacon, and the waste  
Of naked pools, and common crags that lay  
Exposed on the bare fell, were scattered love,  
The spirit of pleasure, and youth's golden gleam.  
O Friend ! we had not seen thee at that time,  
And yet a power is on me, and a strong  
Confusion, and I seem to plant thee there.

Far art thou wandered now in search of health  
And milder breezes,—melancholy lot !  
But thou art with us, with us in the past,  
The present, with us in the times to come.  
There is no grief, no sorrow, no despair,  
No languor, no dejection, no dismay,  
No absence scarcely can there be, for those  
Who love as we do. Speed thee well ! divide  
With us thy pleasure ; thy returning strength,  
Receive it daily as a joy of ours ;  
Share with us thy fresh spirits, whether gift  
Of gales Etesian or of tender thoughts.

I, too, have been a wanderer ; but, alas !  
How different the fate of different men.  
Though mutually unknown, yea nursed and reared  
As if in several elements, we were framed  
To bend at last to the same discipline,  
Predestined, if two beings ever were,  
To seek the same delights, and have one health,  
One happiness. Throughout this narrative,  
Else sooner ended, I have borne in mind  
For whom it registers the birth, and marks the growth,  
Of gentleness, simplicity, and truth,  
And joyous loves, that hallow innocent days  
Of peace and self-command. Of rivers, fields,  
And groves I speak to thee, my Friend ! to thee,  
Who, yet a liveried schoolboy, in the depths  
Of the huge city, on the leaded roof  
Of that wide edifice, thy school and home,  
Wert used to lie and gaze upon the clouds  
Moving in heaven ; or, of that pleasure tired,  
To shut thine eyes, and by internal light  
See trees, and meadows, and thy native stream,  
Far distant, thus beheld from year to year  
Of a long exile. Nor could I forget,  
In this late portion of my argument,  
That scarcely, as my term of pupilage  
Ceased, had I left those academic bowers  
When thou wert thither guided. From the heart  
Of London, and from cloisters there, thou camest,  
And didst sit down in temperance and peace,  
A rigorous student. What a stormy course  
Then followed. Oh ! it is a pang that calls  
For utterance, to think what easy change

Of circumstances might to thee have spared  
A world of pain, ripened a thousand hopes,  
For ever withered. Through this retrospect  
Of my collegiate life I still have had  
Thy after-sojourn in the self-same place  
Present before my eyes, have played with times  
And accidents as children do with cards,  
Or as a man, who, when his house is built,  
A frame locked up in wood and stone, doth still,  
As impotent fancy prompts, by his fireside,  
Rebuild it to his liking. I have thought  
Of thee, thy learning, gorgeous eloquence,  
And all the strength and plumage of thy youth,  
Thy subtle speculations, toils abstruse  
Among the schoolmen, and Platonic forms  
Of wild ideal pageantry, shaped out  
From things well-matched or ill, and words for things,  
The self-created sustenance of a mind  
Debarred from Nature's living images,  
Compelled to be a life unto herself,  
And unrelentingly possessed by thirst  
Of greatness, love, and beauty. Not alone,  
Ah ! surely not in singleness of heart  
Should I have seen the light of evening fade  
From smooth Cam's silent waters : had we met,  
Even at that early time, needs must I trust  
In the belief, that my maturer age,  
My calmer habits, and more steady voice,  
Would with an influence benign have soothed,  
Or chased away, the airy wretchedness  
That batten'd on thy youth. But thou hast trod  
A march of glory, which doth put to shame  
These vain regrets ; health suffers in thee, else  
Such grief for thee would be the weakest thought  
That ever harboured in the breast of man.

A passing word erewhile did lightly touch  
On wanderings of my own, that now embraced  
With livelier hope a region wider far.

When the third summer freed us from restraint.  
A youthful friend, he too a mountaineer,  
Not slow to share my wishes, took his staff,  
And sallying forth, we journeyed side by side,  
Bound to the distant Alps. A hardy slight,

Did this unprecedented course imply,  
Of college studies and their set rewards ;  
Nor had, in truth, the scheme been formed by me  
Without uneasy forethought of the pain,  
The censures, and ill-omening, of those  
To whom my worldly interests were dear.  
But Nature then was sovereign in my mind,  
And mighty forms, seizing a youthful fancy,  
Had given a charter to irregular hopes.  
In any age of uneventful calm  
Among the nations, surely would my heart  
Have been possessed by similar desire ;  
But Europe at that time was thrilled with joy,  
France standing on the top of golden hours,  
And human nature seeming born again.

Lightly equipped, and but a few brief looks  
Cast on the white cliffs of our native shore  
From the receding vessel's deck, we chanced  
To land at Calais on the very eve  
Of that great federal day ; and there we saw,  
In a mean city, and among a few,  
How bright a face is worn when joy of one  
Is joy for tens of millions. Southward thence  
We held our way, direct through hamlets, towns,  
Gaudy with reliques of that festival,  
Flowers left to wither on triumphal arcs,  
And window-garlands. On the public roads,  
And, once, three days successively, through paths  
By which our toilsome journey was abridged,  
Among sequestered villages we walked  
And found benevolence and blessedness  
Spread like a fragrance everywhere, when spring  
Hath left no corner of the land untouched ;  
Where elms for many and many a league in files  
With their thin umbrage, on the stately roads  
Of that great kingdom, rustled o'er our heads,  
For ever near us as we paced along :  
How sweet at such a time, with such delight  
On every side, in prime of youthful strength,  
To feed a Poet's tender melancholy  
And fond conceit of sadness, with the sound  
Of undulations varying as might please  
The wind that swayed them ; once, and more than once,  
Unhoused beneath the evening star we saw

Dances of liberty, and, in late hours  
Of darkness, dances in the open air  
Deftly prolonged, though grey-haired lookers on  
Might waste their breath in chiding.

Under hills—

The vine-clad hills and slopes of Burgundy,  
Upon the bosom of the gentle Saone  
We glided forward with the flowing stream.  
Swift Rhone! thou wert the *wings* on which we cut  
A winding passage with majestic ease  
Between thy lofty rocks. Enchanting show  
Those woods and farms and orchards did present,  
And single cottages and lurking towns,  
Reach after reach, succession without end  
Of deep and stately vales! A lonely pair  
Of strangers, till day closed, we sailed along  
Clustered together with a meriy crowd  
Of those emancipated, a blithe host  
Of travellers, chiefly delegates, returning  
From the great spousals newly solemnised  
At their chief city, in the sight of Heaven.  
Like bees they swarmed, gaudy and gay as bees;  
Some vapoured in the unruliness of joy,  
And with their swords flourished as if to fight  
The saucy air. In this proud company  
We landed—took with them our evening meal,  
Guests welcome almost as the angels were  
To Abraham of old. The supper done,  
With flowing cups elate and happy thoughts  
We rose at signal given, and formed a ring  
And, hand in hand, danced round and round the board;  
All hearts were open, every tongue was loud  
With amity and glee; we bore a name  
Honoured in France, the name of Englishmen,  
And hospitably did they give us hail,  
As their forerunners in a glorious course;  
And round and round the board we danced again.  
With these blithe friends our voyage we renewed  
At early dawn. The monastery bells  
Made a sweet jingling in our youthful ears;  
The rapid river flowing without noise,  
And each uprising or receding spire  
Spake with a sense of peace, at intervals  
Touching the heart amid the boisterous crew  
By whom we were encompassed. Taking leave

Of this glad throng, foot-travellers side by side,  
Measuring our steps in quiet, we pursued  
Our journey, and ere twice the sun had set  
Beheld the Convent of Chartreuse, and there  
Restèd within an awful *solitude* :  
Yes ; for even then no other than a place  
Of soul-affecting *solitude* appeared  
That far-famed region, though our eyes had seen,  
As toward the sacred mansion we advanced,  
Arms flashing, and a military glare  
Of riotous men commissioned to expel  
The blameless inmates, and belike subvert  
That frame of social being, which so long  
Had bodied forth the ghostliness of things  
In silence visible and perpetual calm.  
—"Stay, stay your sacrilegious hands !" —The voice  
Was Nature's, uttered from her Alpine throne ;  
I heard it then and seem to hear it now—  
"Your impious work forbear, perish what may,  
Let this one temple last, be this one spot  
Of earth devoted to eternity !"  
She ceased to speak, but while St. Bruno's pines  
Waved their dark tops, not silent as they waved,  
And while below, along their several beds,  
Murmured the sister streams of Life and Death,  
Thus by conflicting passions pressed, my heart  
Responded ; "Honour to the patriot's zeal !  
Glory and hope to new-born Liberty !  
Hail to the mighty projects of the time !  
Discerning sword that Justice wields, do thou  
Go forth and prosper ; and, ye purging fires,  
Up to the loftiest towers of Pride ascend,  
Fanned by the breath of angry Providence.  
But oh ! if Past and Future be the wings  
On whose support harmoniously conjoined  
Moves the great spirit of human knowledge, spare  
These courts of mystery, where a step advanced  
Between the portals of the shadowy rocks  
Leaves far behind life's treacherous vanities,  
For penitential tears and trembling hopes  
Exchanged—to equalise in God's pure sight  
Monarch and peasant : be the house redeemed  
With its unworldly votaries, for the sake  
Of conquest over sense, hourly achieved  
Through faith and meditative reason, resting

Upon the word of heaven-imparted truth,  
Calmly triumphant ; and for humbler claim  
Of that imaginative impulse sent  
From these majestic floods, yon shining cliffs,  
The untransmuted shapes of many worlds,  
Cerulean ether's pure inhabitants,  
These forests unapproachable by death,  
That shall endure as long as man endures,  
To think, to hope, to worship, and to feel,  
To struggle, to be lost within himself  
In trepidation, from the blank abyss  
To look with bodily eyes, and be consoled."  
Not seldom since that moment have I wished  
That thou, O Friend ! the trouble or the calm  
Hadst shared, when, from profane regards apart,  
In sympathetic reverence we trod  
The floors of those dim cloisters, till that hour,  
From their foundation, strangers to the presence  
Of unrestricted and unthinking man.  
Abroad, how cheeringly the sunshine lay  
Upon the open lawns ! Vallombre's groves  
Entering, we fed the soul with darkness ; thence  
Issued, and with uplifted eyes beheld,  
In different quarters of the bending sky,  
The cross of Jesus stand erect, as if  
Hands of angelic powers had fixed it there,  
Memorial revered by a thousand storms ;  
Yet then, from the indiscriminating sweep  
And rage of one State-whirlwind, insecure.

"Tis not my present purpose to retrace  
That variegated journey step by step.  
A march it was of military speed,  
And Earth did change her images and forms  
Before us, fast as clouds are changed in heaven.  
Day after day, up early and down late,  
From hill to vale we dropped, from vale to hill  
Mounted—from province on to province swept,  
Keen hunters in a chase of fourteen weeks,  
Eager as birds of prey, or as a ship  
Upon the stretch, when winds are blowing fair :  
Sweet coverts did we cross of pastoral life,  
Enticing valleys, greeted them and left  
Too soon, while yet the very flash and gleam  
Of salutation were not passed away.

Oh! sorrow for the youth who could have seen,  
 Unchastened, unsubdued, unawed, unraised  
 To patriarchal dignity of mind,  
 And pure simplicity of wish and will,  
 Those sanctified abodes of peaceful man,  
 Pleased (though to hardship born, and compassed round  
 With danger, varying as the seasons change),  
 Pleased with his daily task, or, if not pleased,  
 Contented, from the moment that the dawn  
 (Ah! surely not without attendant gleams  
 Of soul-illumination) calls him forth  
 To industry, by glistenings flung on rocks,  
 Whose evening shadows lead him to repose.

Well might a stranger look with bounding heart  
 Down on a green recess, the first I saw  
 Of those deep haunts, an aboriginal vale,  
 Quiet and lorded over and possessed  
 By naked huts, wood-built, and sown like tents  
 Or Indian cabins over the fresh lawns  
 And by the river side.

That very day,  
 From a bare ridge we also first beheld  
 Unveiled the summit of Mont Blanc, and grieved  
 To have a soulless image on the eye  
 That had usurped upon a living thought  
 That never more could be. The wondrous Vale  
 Of Chamouny stretched far below, and soon  
 With its dumb cataracts and streams of ice,  
 A motionless array of mighty waves,  
 Five rivers broad and vast, made rich amends,  
 And reconciled us to realities;  
 There small birds warble from the leafy trees,  
 The eagle soars high in the element,  
 There doth the reaper bind the yellow sheaf,  
 The maiden spread the haycock in the sun,  
 While Winter like a well-tamed lion walks,  
 Descending from the mountain to make sport  
 Among the cottages by beds of flowers.

Whate'er in this wide circuit we beheld,  
 Or heard, was fitted to our unripe state  
 Of intellect and heart. With such a book  
 Before our eyes, we could not choose but read  
 Lessons of genuine brotherhood, the plain

And universal reason of mankind,  
The truths of young and old. Nor, side by side  
Pacing, two social pilgrims, or alone  
Each with his humour, could we fail to abound  
In dreams and fictions, pensively composed :  
Dejection taken up for pleasure's sake,  
And gilded sympathies, the willow wreath,  
And sober posies of funereal flowers,  
Gathered among those solitudes sublime  
From formal gardens of the lady Sorrow,  
Did sweeten many a meditative hour.

Yet still in me with those soft luxuries  
Mixed something of stern mood, an underthirst  
Of vigour seldom utterly allayed :  
And from that source how different a sadness  
Would issue, let one incident make known.  
When from the Vallais we had turned, and clomb  
Along the Simplon's steep and rugged road,  
Following a band of muleteers, we reached  
A halting-place, where all together took  
Their noon-tide meal. Hastily rose our guide,  
Leaving us at the board ; awhile we lingered,  
Then paced the beaten downward way that led  
Right to a rough stream's edge, and there broke off ;  
The only track now visible was one  
That from the torrent's further brink held forth  
Conspicuous invitation to ascend  
A lofty mountain. After brief delay  
Crossing the unbridged stream, that road we took,  
And clomb with eagerness, till anxious fears  
Intruded, for we failed to overtake  
Our comrades gone before. By fortunate chance,  
While every moment added doubt to doubt,  
A peasant met us, from whose mouth we learned  
That to the spot which had perplexed us first  
We must descend, and there should find the road,  
Which in the stony channel of the stream  
Lay a few steps, and then along its banks ;  
And, that our future course, all plain to sight,  
Was downwards, with the current of that stream.  
Loth to believe what we so grieved to hear,  
For still we had hopes that pointed to the clouds,  
We questioned him again, and yet again ;  
But every word that from the peasant's lips

Came in reply, translated by our feelings,  
Ended in this,—*that we had crossed the Alps.*

Imagination—here the Power so called  
Through sad incompetence of human speech,  
That awful Power rose from the mind's abyss  
Like an unfathered vapour that enwraps,  
At once, some lonely traveller. I was lost ;  
Halted without an effort to break through ;  
But to my conscious soul I now can say—  
"I recognise thy glory:" in such strength  
Of usurpation, when the light of sense  
Goes out, but with a flash that has revealed  
The invisible world, doth greatness make abode,  
There harbours ; whether we be young or old,  
Our destiny, our being's heart and home,  
Is with infinitude, and only there ;  
With hope it is, hope that can never die,  
Effort, and expectation, and desire,  
And something evermore about to be.  
Under such banners militant, the soul  
Seeks for no trophies, struggles for no spoils  
That may attest her prowess, blest in thoughts  
That are their own perfection and reward,  
Strong in herself and in beatitude  
That hides her, like the mighty flood of Nile  
Poured from his fount of Abyssinian clouds  
To fertilise the whole Egyptian plain.

The melancholy slackening that ensued  
Upon those tidings by the peasant given  
Was soon dislodged. Downwards we hurried fast,  
And, with the half-shaped road which we had missed,  
Entered a narrow chasm. The brook and road  
Were fellow-travellers in this gloomy strait,  
And with them did we journey several hours  
At a slow pace. The immeasurable height  
Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,  
The stationary blasts of waterfalls,  
And in the narrow rent at every turn  
Winds thwarting winds, bewildered and forlorn,  
The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,  
The rocks that muttered close upon our ears,  
Black drizzling crags that spake by the way-side  
As if a voice were in them, the sick sight

And giddy prospect of the raving stream,  
The unfettered clouds and region of the Heavens,  
Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light—  
Were all like workings of one mind, the features  
Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree ;  
Characters of the great Apocalypse,  
The types and symbols of Eternity,  
Of first, and last, and midst, and without end.

That night our lodging was a house that stood  
Alone within the valley, at a point  
Where, tumbling from aloft, a torrent swelled  
The rapid stream whose margin we had trod ;  
A dreary mansion, large beyond all need,  
With high and spacious rooms, deafened and stunned  
By noise of waters, making innocent sleep  
Lie melancholy among weary bones.

Uprisen betimes, our journey we renewed,  
Led by the stream, ere noon-day magnified  
Into a lordly river, broad and deep,  
Dimpling along in silent majesty,  
With mountains for its neighbours, and in view  
Of distant mountains and their snowy tops,  
And thus proceeding to Locarno's Lake,  
Fit resting-place for such a visitant.  
Locarno ! spreading out in width like Heaven,  
How dost thou cleave to the poetic heart,  
Bask in the sunshine of the memory ;  
And Como ! thou, a treasure whom the earth  
Keeps to herself, confined as in a depth  
Of Abyssinian privacy. I spake  
Of thee, thy chestnut woods, and garden plots  
Of Indian corn tended by dark-eyed maids ;  
Thy lofty steeps, and pathways roofed with vines,  
Winding from house to house, from town to town,  
Sole link that binds them to each other ; walks,  
League after league, and cloistral avenues,  
Where silence dwells if music be not there :  
While yet a youth undisciplined in verse,  
Through fond ambition of that hour I strove  
To chant your praise ; nor can approach you now  
Ungreeted by a more melodious Song,  
Where tones of Nature smoothed by learned Art  
May flow in lasting current. Like a breeze

Or sunbeam over your domain I passed  
In motion without pause ; but ye have left  
Your beauty with me, a serene accord  
Of forms and colours, passive, yet endowed  
In their submissiveness with power as sweet  
And gracious, almost, might I dare to say,  
As virtue is, or goodness ; sweet as love,  
Or the remembrance of a generous deed,  
Or mildest visitations of pure thought,  
When God, the giver of all joy, is thanked  
Religiously, in silent blessedness ;  
Sweet as this last herself, for such it is.

With those delightful pathways we advanced,  
For two days' space, in presence of the Lake,  
That, stretching far among the Alps, assumed  
A character more stern. The second night,  
From sleep awakened, and misled by sound  
Of the church clock telling the hours with strokes  
Whose import then we had not learned, we rose.  
By moonlight, doubting not that day was nigh,  
And that meanwhile, by no uncertain path,  
Along the winding margin of the lake,  
Led, as before, we should behold the scene  
Hushed in profound repose. We left the town  
Of Gravedona with this hope ; but soon  
Were lost, bewildered among woods immense,  
And on a rock sate down, to wait for day.  
An open place it was, and overlooked,  
From high, the sullen water far beneath,  
On which a dull red image of the moon  
Lay bedded, changing oftentimes its form  
Like an uneasy snake. From hour to hour  
We sate and sate, wondering, as if the night  
Had been ensnared by witchcraft. On the rock  
At last we stretched our weary limbs for sleep,  
But *could not* sleep, tormented by the stings  
Of insects, which, with noise like that of noon,  
Filled all the woods : the cry of unknown birds ;  
The mountains more by blackness visible  
And their own size, than any outward light ;  
The breathless wilderness of clouds ; the clock  
That told, with unintelligible voice,  
The widely parted hours ; the noise of streams,  
And sometimes rustling motions nigh at hand,

That did not leave us free from personal fear ;  
And, lastly, the withdrawing moon, that set  
Before us, while she still was high in heaven ;—  
These were our food ; and such a summer's night  
Followed that pair of golden days that shed  
On Como's Lake, and all that round it lay,  
Their fairest, softest, happiest influence.

But here I must break off, and bid farewell  
To days, each offering some new sight, or fraught  
With some untried adventure, in a course  
Prolonged till sprinklings of autumnal snow  
Checked our unwearied steps. Let this alone  
Be mentioned as a parting word, that not  
In hollow exultation, dealing out  
Hyperboles of praise comparative ;  
Not rich one moment to be poor for ever ;  
Not prostrate, overborne, as if the mind  
Herself were nothing, a mere pensioner  
On outward forms—did we in presence stand  
Of that magnificent region. On the front  
Of this whole Song is written that my heart  
Must, in such Temple, needs have offered up  
A different worship. Finally, whate'er  
I saw, or heard, or felt, was but a stream  
That flowed into a kindred stream ; a gale,  
Confederate with the current of the soul,  
To speed my voyage ; every sound or sight,  
In its degree of power, administered  
To grandeur or to tenderness,—to the one  
Directly, but to tender thoughts by means  
Less often instantaneous in effect ;  
Led me to these by paths that, in the main,  
Were more circuitous, but not less sure  
Duly to reach the point marked out by Heaven.

Oh, most beloved Friend ! a glorious time,  
A happy time that was ; triumphant looks  
Were then the common language of all eyes ;  
As if awaked from sleep, the Nations hailed  
Their great expectancy : the fife of war  
Was then a spirit-stirring sound indeed,  
A blackbird's whistle in a budding grove.  
We left the Swiss exulting in the fate  
Of their near neighbours ; and, when shortening fast

Our pilgrimage, nor distant far from home,  
 We crossed the Brabant armies on the fret  
 For battle in the cause of Liberty.  
 A stripling, scarcely of the household then  
 Of social life, I looked upon these things  
 As from a distance ; heard, and saw, and felt,  
 Was touched, but with no intimate concern ;  
 I seemed to move along them, as a bird  
 Moves through the air, or as a fish pursues  
 Its sport, or feeds in its proper element ;  
 I wanted not that joy, I did not need  
 Such help ; the ever-living universe,  
 Turn where I might, was opening out its glories,  
 And the independent spirit of pure youth  
 Called forth, at every season, new delights,  
 Spread round my steps like sunshine o'er green fields.

## BOOK SEVENTH

## RESIDENCE IN LONDON

Six changeful years have vanished since I first  
 Poured out (saluted by that quickening breeze  
 Which met me issuing from the City's<sup>1</sup> walls)  
 A glad preamble to this Verse : I sang  
 Aloud, with fervour irresistible  
 Of short-lived transport, like a torrent bursting,  
 From a black thunder-cloud, down Scafell's side  
 To rush and disappear. But soon broke forth  
 (So willed the Muse) a less impetuous stream,  
 That flowed awhile with unabating strength,  
 Then stopped for years ; not audible again  
 Before last primrose-time. Belovèd Friend !  
 The assurance which then cheered some heavy thoughts  
 On thy departure to a foreign land  
 Has failed ; too slowly moves the promised work.  
 Through the whole summer have I been at rest,  
 Partly from voluntary holiday,  
 And part through outward hindrance. But I heard,  
 After the hour of sunset yester-even,  
 Sitting within doors between light and dark,  
 A choir of redbreasts gathered somewhere near  
 My threshold,—minstrels from the distant woods  
 Sent in on Winter's service, to announce,

<sup>1</sup> The City of Goslar, in Lower Saxony.

With preparation artful and benign,  
That the rough lord had left the surly North  
On his accustomed journey. The delight,  
Due to this timely notice, unawares  
Smote me, and, listening, I in whispers said,  
"Ye heartsome Choristers, ye and I will be  
Associates, and, unscared by blustering winds,  
Will chant together." Thereafter, as the shades  
Of twilight deepened, going forth, I spied  
A glow-worm underneath a dusky plume  
Or canopy of yet unwithered fern,  
Clear-shining, like a hermit's taper seen  
Through a thick forest. Silence touched me here  
No less than sound had done before; the child  
Of Summer, lingering, shining, by herself,  
The voiceless worm on the unfrequented hills,  
Seemed sent on the same errand with the choir  
Of Winter that had warbled at my door,  
And the whole year breathed tenderness and love.

The last night's genial feeling overflowed  
Upon this morning, and my favourite grove,  
Tossing in sunshine its dark boughs aloft,  
As if to make the strong wind visible,  
Wakes in me agitations like its own,  
A spirit friendly to the Poet's task,  
Which we will now resume with lively hope,  
Nor checked by aught of tamer argument  
That lies before us, needful to be told.

Returned from that excursion, soon I bade  
Farewell for ever to the sheltered seats  
Of gowned students, quitted hall and bower,  
And every comfort of that privileged ground.  
Well pleased to pitch a vagrant tent among  
The unfenced regions of society.

Yet, undetermined to what course of life  
I should adhere, and seeming to possess  
A little space of intermediate time  
At full command, to London first I turned,  
In no disturbance of excessive hope,  
By personal ambition unenslaved,  
Frugal as there was need, and, though self-willed,  
From dangerous passions free. Three years had flown  
Since I had felt in heart and soul the shock

Of the huge town's first presence, and had paced  
 Her endless streets, a transient visitant :  
 Now, fixed amid that concourse of mankind  
 Where Pleasure whirls about incessantly,  
 And life and labour seem but one, I filled  
 An idler's place ; an idler well content  
 To have a house (what matter for a home ?)  
 That owned him ; living cheerfully abroad  
 With unchecked fancy ever on the stir,  
 And all my young affections out of doors.

There was a time when whatsoe'er is feigned  
 Of airy palaces, and gardens built  
 By Genii of romance ; or hath in grave  
 Authentic history been set forth of Rome,  
 Alcairo, Babylon, or Persepolis ;  
 Or given upon report by pilgrim friars,  
 Of golden cities ten months' journey deep  
 Among Tartarian wilds—fell short, far short,  
 Of what my fond simplicity believed  
 And thought of London—held me by a chain  
 Less strong of wonder and obscure delight.  
 Whether the bolt of childhood's Fancy shot  
 For me beyond its ordinary mark,  
 'Twere vain to ask ; but in our flock of boys  
 Was One, a cripple from his birth, whom chance  
 Summoned from school to London ; fortunate  
 And envied traveller ! When the Boy returned,  
 After short absence, curiously I scanned  
 His mien and person, nor was free, in sooth,  
 From disappointment, not to find some change  
 In look and air, from that new region brought,  
 As if from Fairy-land. Much I questioned him ;  
 And every word he uttered, on my ears  
 Fell flatter than a caged parrot's note,  
 That answers unexpectedly awry,  
 And mocks the prompter's listening. Marvellous things  
 Had vanity (quick Spirit that appears  
 Almost as deeply seated and as strong  
 In a Child's heart as fear itself) conceived  
 For my enjoyment. Would that I could now  
 Recall what then I pictured to myself,  
 Of mitred Prelates, Lords in ermine clad,  
 The King, and the King's Palace, and, not last,  
 Nor least, Heaven bless him ! the renowned Lord Mayor.

Dreams not unlike to those which once begat  
A change of purpose in young Whittington,  
When he, a friendless and a drooping boy,  
Sate on a stone, and heard the bells speak out  
Articulate music. Above all, one thought  
Baffled my understanding : how men lived  
Even next-door neighbours, as we say, yet still  
Strangers, not knowing each the other's name.

Oh, wondrous power of words, by simple faith  
Licensed to take the meaning that we love !  
Vauxhall and Ranelagh ! I then had heard  
Of your green groves, and wilderness of lamps  
Dimming the stars, and fireworks magical,  
And gorgeous ladies, under splendid domes,  
Floating in dance, or warbling high in air  
The songs of spirits ! Nor had Fancy fed  
With less delight upon that other class  
Of marvels, broad-day wonders permanent :  
The River proudly bridged ; the dizzy top  
And Whispering Gallery of St. Paul's ; the tombs  
Of Westminster ; the Giants of Guildhall ;  
Bedlam, and those carved maniacs at the gates,  
Perpetually recumbent ; Statues—man,  
And the horse under him—in gilded pomp  
Adorning flowery gardens, 'mid vast squares ;  
The Monument, and that Chamber of the Tower  
Where England's sovereigns sit in long array,  
Their steeds bestriding,—every mimic shape  
Cased in the gleaming mail the monarch wore,  
Whether for gorgeous tournament addressed,  
Or life or death upon the battle-field.  
Those bold imaginations in due time  
Had vanished, leaving others in their stead :  
And now I looked upon the living scene ;  
Familiarly perused it ; oftentimes,  
In spite of strongest disappointment, pleased  
Through courteous self-submission, as a tax  
Paid to the object by prescriptive right.

Rise up, thou monstrous ant-hill on the plain  
Of a too busy world ! Before me flow,  
Thou endless stream of men and moving things !  
Thy every-day appearance, as it strikes—  
With wonder heightened, or sublimed by awe—

On strangers, of all ages ; the quick dance  
Of colours, lights, and forms ; the deafening din ;  
The comers and the goers face to face,  
Face after face ; the string of dazzling wares,  
Shop after shop, with symbols, blazoned names,  
And all the tradesman's honours overhead :  
Here, fronts of houses, like a title-page,  
With letters huge inscribed from top to toe,  
Stationed above the door, like guardian saints ;  
There, allegoric shapes, female or male,  
Or physiognomies of real men,  
Land-warriors, kings, or admirals of the sea,  
Boyle, Shakespeare, Newton, or the attractive head  
Of some quack-doctor, famous in his day.

Meanwhile the roar continues, till at length,  
Escaped as from an enemy, we turn  
Abruptly into some sequestered nook,  
Still as a sheltered place when winds blow loud !  
At leisure, thence, through tracts of thin resort,  
And sights and sounds that come at intervals,  
We take our way. A raree-show is here,  
With children gathered round ; another street  
Presents a company of dancing dogs,  
Or dromedary, with an antic pair  
Of monkeys on his back ; a minstrel band  
Of Savoyards ; or, single and alone,  
An English ballad-singer. Private courts,  
Gloomy as coffins, and unsightly lanes  
Thrilled by some female vendor's scream, belike  
The very shrillest of all London cries,  
May then entangle our impatient steps ;  
Conducted through those labyrinths, unawares,  
To privileged regions and inviolate,  
Where from their airy lodges studious lawyers  
Look out on waters, walks, and gardens green.

Thence back into the throng, until we reach,  
Following the tide that slackens by degrees,  
Some half-frequented scene, where wider streets  
Bring straggling breezes of suburban air.  
Here files of ballads dangle from dead walls ;  
Advertisements, of giant-size, from high  
Press forward, in all colours, on the sight ;  
These, bold in conscious merit, lower down ;

*That*, fronted with a most imposing word,  
Is, peradventure, one in masquerade.  
As on the broadening causeway we advance,  
Behold, turned upwards, a face hard and strong  
In lineaments, and red with over-toil.  
'Tis one encountered here and everywhere ;  
A travelling cripple, by the trunk cut short,  
And stumping on his arms. In sailor's garb  
Another lies at length, beside a range  
Of well-formed characters, with chalk inscribed  
Upon the smooth flat stones : the Nurse is here,  
The Bachelor, that loves to sun himself,  
The military Idler, and the Dame,  
That field-ward takes her walk with decent steps.

Now homeward through the thickening hubbub, where  
See, among less distinguishable shapes,  
The begging scavenger, with hat in hand ;  
The Italian, as he thrids his way with care,  
Steadying, far-seen, a frame of images  
Upon his head ; with basket at his breast  
The Jew ; the stately and slow-moving Turk,  
With freight of slippers piled beneath his arm !

Enough ;—the mighty concourse I surveyed  
With no unthinking mind, well pleased to note  
Among the crowd all specimens of man,  
Through all the colours which the sun bestows,  
And every character of form and face :  
The Swede, the Russian ; from the genial south,  
The Frenchman and the Spaniard ; from remote  
America, the Hunter-Indian ; Moors,  
Malays, Lascars, the Tartar, the Chinese,  
And Negro Ladies in white muslin gowns.

At leisure, then, I viewed, from day to day,  
The spectacles within doors,—birds and beasts  
Of every nature, and strange plants convened  
From every clime ; and, next, those sights that ape  
The absolute presence of reality,  
Expressing, as in mirror, sea and land,  
And what earth is, and what she has to show.  
I do not here allude to subtlest craft,  
By means refined attaining purest ends,  
But imitations, fondly made in plain  
Confession of man's weakness and his loves.

Whether the Painter, whose ambitious skill  
Submits to nothing less than taking in  
A whole horizon's circuit, do with power,  
Like that of angels or commissioned spirits,  
Fix us upon some lofty pinnacle,  
Or in a ship on waters, with a world  
Of life, and life-like mockery beneath,  
Above, behind, far stretching and before ;  
Or more mechanic artist represent  
By scale exact, in model, wood or clay,  
From blended colours also borrowing help,  
Some miniature of famous spots or things,—  
St. Peter's Church ; or, more aspiring aim,  
In microscopic vision, Rome herself ;  
Or, haply, some choice rural haunt,—the Falls  
Of Tivoli ; and, high upon that steep,  
The Sibyl's mouldering Temple ! every tree,  
Villa, or cottage, lurking among rocks  
Throughout the landscape ; tuft, stone scratch minute—  
All that the traveller sees when he is there.

Add to these exhibitions, mute and still,  
Others of wider scope, where living men,  
Music, and shifting pantomimic scenes,  
Diversified the allurement. Need I fear  
To mention by its name, as in degree,  
Lowest of these and humblest in attempt,  
Yet richly graced with honours of her own,  
Half-rural Sadler's Wells ? Though at that time  
Intolerant, as is the way of youth  
Unless itself be pleased, here more than once  
Taking my seat, I saw (nor blush to add,  
With ample recompense) giants and dwarfs,  
Clowns, conjurors, posture-masters, harlequins,  
Amid the uproar of the rabblement,  
Perform their feats. Nor was it mean delight  
To watch crude Nature work in untaught minds ;  
To note the laws and progress of belief ;  
Though obstinate on this way, yet on that  
How willingly we travel, and how far !  
To have, for instance, brought upon the scene  
The champion, Jack the Giant-killer : Lo !  
He dons his coat of darkness ; on the stage  
Walks, and achieves his wonders, from the eye  
Of living Mortal covert, "as the moon

Hid in her vacant interlunar cave."  
Delusion bold! and how can it be wrought?  
The garb he wears is black as death, the word  
"Invisible" flames forth upon his chest.

Here, too, were "forms and pressures of the time,"  
Rough, bold, as Grecian comedy displayed  
When Art was young; dramas of living men,  
And recent things yet warm with life; a sea-fight,  
Shipwreck, or some domestic incident  
Divulged by Truth and magnified by Fame;  
Such as the daring brotherhood of late  
Set forth, too serious theme for that light place—  
I mean, O distant Friend! a story drawn  
From our own ground,—the Maid of Buttermere,—  
And how, unfaithful to a virtuous wife  
Deserted and deceived, the Spoiler came  
And wooed the artless daughter of the hills,  
And wedded her, in cruel mockery  
Of love and marriage bonds. These words to thee  
Must needs bring back the moment when we first,  
Ere the broad world rang with the maiden's name,  
Beheld her serving at the cottage inn;  
Both stricken, as she entered or withdrew,  
With admiration of her modest mien  
And carriage, marked by unexampled grace.  
We since that time not unfamiliarly  
Have seen her,—her discretion have observed,  
Her just opinions, delicate reserve,  
Her patience, and humility of mind  
Unspoiled by commendation and the excess  
Of public notice—an offensive light  
To a meek spirit suffering inwardly.

From this memorial tribute to my theme  
I was returning, when, with sundry forms  
Commingled—shapes which met me in the way  
That we must tread—thy image rose again,  
Maiden of Buttermere! She lives in peace  
Upon the spot where she was born and reared;  
Without contamination doth she live  
In quietness, without anxiety:  
Beside the mountain chapel, sleeps in earth  
Her new-born infant, fearless as a lamb  
That, thither driven from some unsheltered place,

Rests underneath the little rock-like pile  
When storms are raging. Happy are they both—  
Mother and child!—These feelings, in themselves  
Trite, do yet scarcely seem so when I think  
On those ingenuous moments of our youth  
Ere we have learnt by use to slight the crimes  
And sorrows of the world. Those simple days  
Are now my theme; and, foremost of the scenes,  
Which yet survive in memory, appears  
One, at whose centre sate a lovely Boy,  
A sportive infant, who, for six months' space,  
Not more, had been of age to deal about  
Articulate prattle—Child as beautiful  
As ever clung around a mother's neck,  
Or father fondly gazed upon with pride.  
There, too, conspicuous for stature tall  
And large dark eyes, beside her infant stood  
The mother; but, upon her cheeks diffused,  
False tints too well accorded with the glare  
From play-house lustres thrown without reserve  
On every object near. The Boy had been  
The pride and pleasure of all lookers-on  
In whatsoever place, but seemed in this  
A sort of alien scattered from the clouds.  
Of lusty vigour, more than infantine  
He was in limb, in cheek a summer rose  
Just three parts blown—a cottage-child—if e'er,  
By cottage-door on breezy mountain-side,  
Or in some sheltering vale, was seen a babe  
By Nature's gifts so favoured. Upon a board  
Decked with refreshments had this child been placed,  
*His* little stage in the vast theatre,  
And there he sate, surrounded with a throng  
Of chance spectators, chiefly dissolute men  
And shameless women, treated and caressed;  
Ate, drank, and with the fruit and glasses played,  
While oaths and laughter and indecent speech  
Were rife about him as the songs of birds  
Contending after showers. The mother now  
Is fading out of memory, but I see  
The lovely Boy as I beheld him then  
Among the wretched and the falsely gay,  
Like one of those who walked with hair unsinged  
Amid the fiery furnace. Charms and spells  
Muttered on black and spiteful instigation

Have stopped, as some believe, the kindest growths.  
Ah, with how different spirit might a prayer  
Have been preferred, that this fair creature, checked  
By special privilege of Nature's love,  
Should in his childhood be detained for ever !  
But with its universal freight the tide  
Hath rolled along, and this bright innocent,  
Mary ! may now have lived till he could look  
With envy on thy nameless babe that sleeps,  
Beside the mountain chapel, undisturbed.

Four rapid years had scarcely then been told  
Since, travelling southward from our pastoral hills,  
I heard, and for the first time in my life,  
The voice of woman utter blasphemy—  
Saw woman as she is, to open shame  
Abandoned, and the pride of public vice ;  
I shuddered, for a barrier seemed at once  
Thrown in that from humanity divorced  
Humanity, splitting the race of man  
In twain, yet leaving the same outward form.  
Distress of mind ensued upon the sight,  
And ardent meditation. Later years  
Brought to such spectacle a milder sadness,  
Feelings of pure commiseration, grief  
For the individual and the overthrow  
Of her soul's beauty ; farther I was then  
But seldom led, or wished to go ; in truth  
The sorrow of the passion stopped me there.

But let me now, less moved, in order take  
Our argument. Enough is said to show  
How casual incidents of real life,  
Observed where pastime only had been sought,  
Outweighed, or put to flight, the set events  
And measured passions of the stage, albeit  
By Siddons trod in the fulness of her power.  
Yet was the theatre my dear delight ;  
The very gilding, lamps and painted scrolls,  
And all the mean upholstery of the place,  
Wanted not animation, when the tide  
Of pleasure ebbed but to return as fast  
With the ever-shifting figures of the scene,  
Solemn or gay : whether some beauteous dame  
Advanced in radiance through a deep recess  
Of thick entangled forest, like the moon

Opening the clouds ; or sovereign king, announced  
With flourishing trumpet, came in full-blown state  
Of the world's greatness, winding round with train  
Of courtiers, banners, and a length of guards ;  
Or captive led in abject weeds, and jingling  
His slender manacles ; or romping girl  
Bounced, leapt, and pawed the air ; or mumbling sire,  
A scare-crow pattern of old age dressed up  
In all the tatters of infirmity  
All loosely put together, hobbled in,  
Stumping upon a cane with which he smites,  
From time to time, the solid boards, and makes them  
Prate somewhat loudly of the whereabout  
Of one so overloaded with his years.  
But what of this ! the laugh, the grin, grimace,  
The antics striving to outstrip each other,  
Were all received, the least of them not lost,  
With an unmeasured welcome. Through the night,  
Between the show, and many-headed mass  
Of the spectators, and each several nook  
Filled with its fray or brawl, how eagerly  
And with what flashes, as it were, the mind  
Turned this way—that way ! sportive and alert  
And watchful, as a kitten when at play,  
While winds are eddying round her, among straws  
And rustling leaves. Enchanting age and sweet !  
Romantic almost, looked at through a space,  
How small, of intervening years ! For then,  
Though surely no mean progress had been made  
In meditations holy and sublime,  
Yet something of a girlish child-like gloss  
Of novelty survived for scenes like these ;  
Enjoyment haply handed down from times  
When at a country-playhouse, some rude barn  
Tricked out for that proud use, if I perchance  
Caught, on a summer evening through a chink  
In the old wall, an unexpected glimpse  
Of daylight, the bare thought of where I was  
Gladdened me more than if I had been led  
Into a dazzling cavern of romance,  
Crowded with Genii busy among works  
Not to be looked at by the common sun.

The matter that detains us now may seem,  
To many, neither dignified enough

Nor arduous, yet will not be scorned by them,  
Who, looking inward, have observed the ties  
That bind the perishable hours of life  
Each to the other, and the curious props  
By which the world of memory and thought  
Exists and is sustained. More lofty themes,  
Such as at least do wear a prouder face,  
Solicit our regard ; but when I think  
Of these, I feel the imaginative power  
Languish within me ; even then it slept,  
When, pressed by tragic sufferings, the heart  
Was more than full ; amid my sobs and tears  
It slept, even in the pregnant season of youth.  
For though I was most passionately moved  
And yielded to all changes of the scene  
With an obsequious promptness, yet the storm  
Passed not beyond the suburbs of the mind ;  
Save when realities of act and mien,  
The incarnation of the spirits that move  
In harmony amid the Poet's world,  
Rose to ideal grandeur, or, called forth  
By power of contrast, made me recognise,  
As at a glance, the things which I had shaped,  
And yet not shaped, had seen and scarcely seen,  
When, having closed the mighty Shakespeare's page,  
I mused, and thought, and felt, in solitude.

Pass we from entertainments, that are such  
Professedly, to others titled higher,  
Yet, in the estimate of youth at least,  
More near akin to those than names imply,—  
I mean the brawls of lawyers in their courts  
Before the ermined judge, or that great stage  
Where senators, tongue-favoured men, perform,  
Admired and envied. Oh ! the beating heart,  
When one among the prime of these rose up,—  
One, of whose name from childhood we had heard  
Familiarly, a household term, like those,  
The Bedfords, Glosters, Salsburys, of old,  
Whom the fifth Harry talks of. Silence ! hush !  
This is no trifter, no short-flighted wit,  
No stammerer of a minute, painfully  
Delivered. No ! the Orator hath yoked  
The Hours, like young Aurora, to his car :  
Thrice welcome Presence ! how can patience e'er

Grow weary of attending on a track  
 That kindles with such glory! All are charmed,  
 Astonished; like a hero in romance,  
 He winds away his never-ending horn;  
 Words follow words, sense seems to follow sense:  
 What memory and what logic! till the strain  
 Transcendent, superhuman as it seemed,  
 Grows tedious even in a young man's ear.

Genius of Burke! forgive the pen seduced  
 By specious wonders, and too slow to tell  
 Of what the ingenuous, what bewildered men,  
 Beginning to mistrust their boastful guides,  
 And wise men, willing to grow wiser, caught,  
 Rapt auditors! from thy most eloquent tongue—  
 Now mute, for ever mute in the cold grave.  
 I see him,—old, but vigorous in age,—  
 Stand like an oak whose stag-horn branches start  
 Out of its leafy brow, the more to awe  
 The younger brethren of the grove. But some—  
 While he forewarns, denounces, launches forth,  
 Against all systems built on abstract rights,  
 Keen ridicule; the majesty proclaims  
 Of Institutes and Laws, hallowed by time;  
 Declares the vital power of social ties  
 Endear'd by Custom; and with high disdain,  
 Exploding upstart Theory, insists  
 Upon the allegiance to which men are born—  
 Some—say at once a froward multitude—  
 Murmur (for truth is hated, where not loved)  
 As the winds fret within the Æolian cave,  
 Galled by their monarch's chain. The times were big  
 With ominous change, which, night by night, provoked  
 Keen struggles, and black clouds of passion raised;  
 But memorable moments intervened,  
 When Wisdom, like the Goddess from Jove's brain,  
 Broke forth in armour of resplendent words,  
 Startling the Synod. Could a youth, and one  
 In ancient story versed, whose breast had heaved  
 Under the weight of classic eloquence,  
 Sit, see, and hear, unthankful, uninspired?

Nor did the Pulpit's oratory fail  
 To achieve its higher triumph. Not unfelt  
 Were its admonishments, nor lightly heard  
 The awful truths delivered thence by tongues

Endowed with various power to search the soul ;  
Yet ostentation, domineering, oft  
Poured forth harangues, how sadly out of place !—  
There have I seen a comely bachelor,  
Fresh from a toilette of two hours, ascend  
His rostrum, with seraphic glance look up,  
And, in a tone elaborately low  
Beginning, lead his voice through many a maze  
A minuet course ; and, winding up his mouth,  
From time to time, into an orifice  
Most delicate, a lurking eyelet, small,  
And only not invisible, again  
Open it out, diffusing thence a smile  
Of rapt irradiation, exquisite.  
Meanwhile the Evangelists, Isaiah, Job,  
Moses, and he who penned, the other day,  
The Death of Abel, Shakespeare, and the Bard  
Whose genius spangled o'er a gloomy theme  
With fancies thick as his inspiring stars,  
And Ossian (doubt not—'tis the naked truth)  
Summoned from streamy Morven—each and all  
Would, in their turns, lend ornaments and flowers  
To entwine the crook of eloquence that helped  
This pretty Shepherd, pride of all the plains,  
To rule and guide his captivated flock.

I glance but at a few conspicuous marks,  
Leaving a thousand others, that, in hall,  
Court, theatre, conventicle, or shop,  
In public room or private, park or street,  
Each fondly reared on his own pedestal,  
Looked out for admiration. Folly, vice,  
Extravagance in gesture, mien, and dress,  
And all the strife of singularity,  
Lies to the ear, and lies to every sense—  
Of these, and of the living shapes they wear,  
There is no end. Such candidates for regard,  
Although well pleased to be where they were found,  
I did not hunt after, nor greatly prize,  
Nor made unto myself a secret boast  
Of reading them with quick and curious eye ;  
But, as a common produce, things that are  
To-day, to-morrow will be, took of them  
Such willing note, as, on some errand bound  
That asks not speed, a traveller might bestow

On sea-shells that bestrew the sandy beach,  
Or daisies swarming through the fields of June.

But foolishness and madness in parade,  
Though most at home in this their dear domain,  
Are scattered everywhere, no rarities,  
Even to the rudest novice of the Schools.  
Me, rather, it employed, to note, and keep  
In memory, those individual sights  
Of courage, or integrity, or truth,  
Or tenderness, which there, set off by foil,  
Appeared more touching. One will I select—  
A Father—for he bore that sacred name ;—  
Him saw I, sitting in an open square,  
Upon a corner-stone of that low wall,  
Wherein were fixed the iron pales that fenced  
A spacious grass-plot ; there, in silence, sate  
This One Man, with a sickly babe outstretched  
Upon his knee, whom he had thither brought  
For sunshine, and to breathe the fresher air.  
Of those who passed, and me who looked at him,  
He took no heed ; but in his brawny arms  
(The Artificer was to the elbow bare,  
And from his work this moment had been stolen)  
He held the child, and, bending over it,  
As if he were afraid both of the sun  
And of the air, which he had come to seek,  
Eyed the poor babe with love unutterable.

As the black storm upon the mountain top  
Sets off the sunbeam in the valley, so  
That huge fermenting mass of human-kind  
Serves as a solemn background, or relief,  
To single forms and objects, whence they draw,  
For feeling and contemplative regard,  
More than inherent liveliness and power.  
How oft, amid those overflowing streets,  
Have I gone forward with the crowd, and said  
Unto myself, "The face of every one  
That passes by me is a mystery !"  
Thus have I looked, nor ceased to look, oppressed  
By thoughts of what and whither, when and how,  
Until the shapes before my eyes became  
A second-sight procession, such as glides  
Over still mountains, or appears in dreams ;  
And once, far-travelled in such mood, beyond

The reach of common indication, lost  
Amid the moving pageant, I was smitten  
Abruptly, with the view (a sight not rare)  
Of a blind Beggar, who, with upright face,  
Stood, propped against a wall, upon his chest  
Wearing a written paper, to explain  
His story, whence he came, and who he was.  
Caught by the spectacle my mind turned round  
As with the might of waters; and apt type  
This label seemed of the utmost we can know,  
Both of ourselves and of the universe;  
And, on the shape of that unmoving man,  
His steadfast face and sightless eyes, I gazed,  
As if admonished from another world.

Though reared upon the base of outward things,  
Structures like these the excited spirit mainly  
Builds for herself; scenes different there are,  
Full-formed, that take, with small internal help,  
Possession of the faculties,—the peace  
That comes with night; the deep solemnity  
Of nature's intermediate hours of rest,  
When the great tide of human life stands still:  
The business of the day to come, unborn,  
Of that gone by, locked up, as in the grave;  
The blended calmness of the heavens and earth,  
Moonlight and stars, and empty streets, and sounds  
Unfrequent as in deserts; at late hours  
Of winter evenings, when unwholesome rains  
Are falling hard, with people yet astir,  
The feeble salutation from the voice  
Of some unhappy woman, now and then  
Heard as we pass, when no one looks about,  
Nothing is listened to. But these, I fear,  
Are falsely catalogued; things that are, are not,  
As the mind answers to them, or the heart  
Is prompt, or slow, to feel. What say you, then,  
To times, when half the city shall break out  
Full of one passion, vengeance, rage, or fear?  
To executions, to a street on fire,  
Mobs, riots, or rejoicings? From these sights  
Take one,—that ancient festival, the Fair,  
Holden where martyrs suffered in past time,  
And named of St. Bartholomew; there, see  
A work completed to our hands, that lays,

If any spectacle on earth can do,  
 The whole creative powers of man asleep !—  
 For once, the Muse's help will we implore,  
 And she shall lodge us, wafted on her wings,  
 Above the press and danger of the crowd,  
 Upon some showman's platform. What a shock  
 For eyes and ears ! what anarchy and din,  
 Barbarian and infernal,—a phantasma,  
 Monstrous in colour, motion, shape, sight, sound !  
 Below, the open space, through every nook  
 Of the wide area, twinkles, is alive  
 With heads ; the midway region, and above,  
 Is thronged with staring pictures and huge scrolls,  
 Dumb proclamations of the Prodigies ;  
 With chattering monkeys dangling from their poles,  
 And children whirling in their roundabouts ;  
 With those that stretch the neck and strain the eyes,  
 And crack the voice in rivalry, the crowd  
 Inviting ; with buffoons against buffoons  
 Grimacing, writhing, screaming,—him who grinds  
 The hurdy-gurdy, at the fiddle weaves,  
 Rattles the salt-box, thumps the kettle-drum,  
 And him who at the trumpet puffs his cheeks,  
 The silver-collared Negro with his timbrel,  
 Equestrians, tumblers, women, girls, and boys,  
 Blue-breeched, pink-vested, with high-towering plumes.—  
 All moveables of wonder, from all parts,  
 Are here—Albinos, painted Indians, Dwarfs,  
 The Horse of knowledge, and the learned Pig,  
 The Stone-eater, the man that swallows fire,  
 Giants, Ventriloquists, the Invisible Girl,  
 The Bust that speaks and moves its goggling eyes,  
 The Wax-work, Clock-work, all the marvellous craft  
 Of modern Merlins, Wild Beasts, Puppet-shows,  
 All out-o'-the-way, far-fetched, perverted things,  
 All freaks of nature, all Promethean thoughts  
 Of man, his dulness, madness, and their feats  
 All jumbled up together, to compose  
 A Parliament of Monsters. Tents and Booths  
 Meanwhile, as if the whole were one vast mill,  
 Are vomiting, receiving on all sides,  
 Men, Women, three-years' Children, Babes in arms.

Oh, blank confusion ! true epitome  
 Of what the mighty City is herself,

To thousands upon thousands of her sons,  
Living amid the same perpetual whirl  
Of trivial objects, melted and reduced  
To one identity, by differences  
That have no law, no meaning, and no end—  
Oppression, under which even highest minds  
Must labour, whence the strongest are not free.  
But though the picture weary out the eye,  
By nature an unmanageable sight,  
It is not wholly so to him who looks  
In steadiness, who hath among least things  
An under-sense of greatest ; sees the parts  
As parts, but with a feeling of the whole.  
This, of all acquisitions, first awaits  
On sundry and most widely different modes  
Of education, nor with least delight  
On that through which I passed. Attention springs,  
And comprehensiveness and memory flow,  
From early converse with the works of God  
Among all regions ; chiefly where appear  
Most obviously simplicity and power.  
Think, how the everlasting streams and woods,  
Stretched and still stretching far and wide, exalt  
The roving Indian, on his desert sands :  
What grandeur not unfelt, what pregnant show  
Of beauty, meets the sun-burnt Arab's eye :  
And, as the sea propels, from zone to zone,  
Its currents ; magnifies its shoals of life  
Beyond all compass ; spreads, and sends aloft  
Armies of clouds,—even so, its powers and aspects  
Shape for mankind, by principles as fixed,  
The views and aspirations of the soul  
To majesty. Like virtue have the forms  
Perennial of the ancient hills ; nor less  
The changeful language of their countenances  
Quickens the slumbering mind, and aids the thoughts,  
However multitudinous, to move  
With order and relation. This, if still,  
As hitherto, in freedom I may speak,  
Not violating any just restraint,  
As may be hoped, of real modesty,—  
This did I feel, in London's vast domain.  
The Spirit of Nature was upon me there ;  
The soul of Beauty and enduring Life  
Vouchsafed her inspiration, and diffused,

Through meagre lines and colours, and the press  
Of self-destroying, transitory things,  
Composure, and ennobling Harmony.

## BOOK EIGHTH

RETROSPECT—LOVE OF NATURE LEADING TO LOVE  
OF MAN

WHAT sounds are those, Helvellyn, that are heard  
Up to thy summit, through the depth of air  
Ascending, as if distance had the power  
To make the sounds more audible? What crowd  
Covers, or sprinkles o'er, yon village green?  
Crowd seems it, solitary hill! to thee,  
Though but a little family of men,  
Shepherds and tillers of the ground—betimes  
Assembled with their children and their wives,  
And here and there a stranger interspersed.  
They hold a rustic fair—a festival,  
Such as, on this side now, and now on that,  
Repeated through his tributary vales,  
Helvellyn, in the silence of his rest,  
Sees annually, if clouds towards either ocean  
Blown from their favourite resting-place, or mists  
Dissolved, have left him an unshrouded head.  
Delightful day it is for all who dwell  
In this secluded glen, and eagerly  
They give it welcome. Long ere heat of noon,  
From byre or field the kine were brought; the sheep  
Are penned in cotes; the chaffering is begun.  
The heifer lows, uneasy at the voice  
Of a new master; bleat the flocks aloud.  
Booths are there none; a stall or two is here;  
A lame man or a blind, the one to beg,  
The other to make music; hither, too,  
From far, with basket, slung upon her arm,  
Of hawker's wares—books, pictures, combs, and pins—  
Some aged woman finds her way again,  
Year after year, a punctual visitant!  
There also stands a speech-maker by rote,  
Pulling the strings of his boxed raree-show;  
And in the lapse of many years may come  
Prouder itinerant, mountebank, or he  
Whose wonders in a covered wain lie hid.  
But one there is, the loveliest of them all,

Some sweet lass of the valley, looking out  
For gains, and who that sees her would not buy?  
Fruits of her father's orchard are her wares,  
And with the ruddy produce she walks round  
Among the crowd, half pleased with, half ashamed  
Of, her new office, blushing restlessly.  
The children now are rich, for the old to-day  
Are generous as the young; and, if content  
With looking on, some ancient wedded pair  
Sit in the shade together; while they gaze,  
"A cheerful smile unbends the wrinkled brow,  
The days departed start again to life,  
And all the scenes of childhood reappear,  
Faint, but more tranquil, like the changing sun  
To him who slept at noon and wakes at eve."<sup>1</sup>  
Thus gaiety and cheerfulness prevail,  
Spreading from young to old, from old to young,  
And no one seems to want his share.—Immense  
Is the recess, the circumambient world  
Magnificent, by which they are embraced:  
They move about upon the soft green turf:  
How little they, they and their doings, seem,  
And all that they can further or obstruct!  
Through utter weakness pitifully dear,  
As tender infants are: and yet how great!  
For all things serve them: them the morning light  
Loves, as it glistens on the silent rocks;  
And them the silent rocks, which now from high  
Look down upon them; the reposing clouds;  
The wild brooks prattling from invisible haunts;  
And old Helvellyn, conscious of the stir  
Which animates this day their calm abode.

With deep devotion, Nature, did I feel,  
In that enormous City's turbulent world  
Of men and things, what benefit I owed  
To thee, and those domains of rural peace,  
Where to the sense of beauty first my heart  
Was opened; tract more exquisitely fair  
Than that famed paradise of ten thousand trees,  
Or Gehol's matchless gardens, for delight  
Of the Tartarian dynasty composed  
(Beyond that mighty wall, not fabulous,

<sup>1</sup> These lines are from a descriptive Poem—"Malvern Hills"—by Joseph Cottle.

China's stupendous mound) by patient toil  
 Of myriads and boon nature's lavish help ;  
 There, in a clime from widest empire chosen,  
 Fulfilling (could enchantment have done more ?)  
 A sumptuous dream of flowery lawns, with domes  
 Of pleasure sprinkled over, shady dells  
 For eastern monasteries, sunny mounts  
 With temples crested, bridges, gondolas,  
 Rocks, dens, and groves of foliage taught to melt  
 Into each other their obsequious hues,  
 Vanished and vanishing in subtle chase,  
 Too fine to be pursued ; or standing forth  
 In no discordant opposition, strong  
 And gorgeous as the colours side by side  
 Bedded among rich plumes of tropic birds ;  
 And mountains over all, embracing all ;  
 And all the landscape, endlessly enriched  
 With waters running, falling, or asleep.

But lovelier far than this, the paradise  
 Where I was reared ; in Nature's primitive gifts  
 Favoured no less, and more to every sense  
 Delicious, seeing that the sun and sky,  
 The elements, and seasons as they change,  
 Do find a worthy fellow-labourer there—  
 Man free, man working for himself, with choice  
 Of time, and place, and object ; by his wants,  
 His comforts, native occupations, cares,  
 Cheerfully led to individual ends  
 Or social, and still followed by a train  
 Unwooded, unthought-of even—simplicity,  
 And beauty, and inevitable grace.

Yea, when a glimpse of those imperial bowers  
 Would to a child be transport over-great,  
 When but a half-hour's roam through such a place  
 Would leave behind a dance of images,  
 That shall break in upon his sleep for weeks ;  
 Even then the common haunts of the green earth,  
 And ordinary interests of man,  
 Which they embosom, all without regard  
 As both may seem, are fastening on the heart  
 Insensibly, each with the other's help.  
 For me, when my affections first were led  
 From kindred, friends, and playmates, to partake  
 Love for the human creature's absolute self,

That noticeable kindness of heart  
Sprang out of fountains, there abounding most,  
Where sovereign Nature dictated the tasks  
And occupations which her beauty adorned,  
And Shepherds were the men that pleased me first,  
Not such as Saturn ruled 'mid Latian wilds,  
With arts and laws so tempered, that their lives  
Left, even to us toiling in this late day,  
A bright tradition of the golden age;  
Not such as, 'mid Arcadian fastnesses  
Sequestered, handed down among themselves  
Felicity, in Grecian song renowned;  
Nor such as—when an adverse fate had driven,  
From house and home, the courtly band whose fortunes  
Entered, with Shakespeare's genius, the wild woods  
Of Arden—amid sunshine or in shade  
Culled the best fruits of Time's uncounted hours,  
Ere Phoebe sighed for the false Ganymede;  
Or there where Perdita and Florizel  
Together danced, Queen of the feast, and King;  
Nor such as Spenser fabled. True it is,  
That I had heard (what he perhaps had seen)  
Of maids at sunrise bringing in from far  
Their May-bush, and along the streets in flocks  
Parading with a song of taunting rhymes,  
Aimed at the laggards slumbering within doors;  
Had also heard, from those who yet remembered,  
Tales of the May-pole dance, and wreaths that decked  
Porch, door-way, or kirk-pillar; and of youths,  
Each with his maid, before the sun was up,  
By annual custom, issuing forth in troops,  
To drink the waters of some sainted well,  
And hang it round with garlands. Love survives;  
But, for such purpose, flowers no longer grow:  
The times, too sage, perhaps too proud, have dropped  
These lighter graces; and the rural ways  
And manners which my childhood looked upon  
Were the unluxuriant produce of a life  
Intent on little but substantial needs,  
Yet rich in beauty, beauty that was felt.  
But images of danger and distress,  
Man suffering among awful Powers and Forms;  
Of this I heard, and saw enough to make  
Imagination restless; nor was free  
Myself from frequent perils; nor were tales

Wanting,—the tragedies of former times,  
Hazards and strange escapes, of which the rocks  
Immutable, and everflowing streams,  
Where'er I roamed, were speaking monuments.

Smooth life had flock and shepherd in old time,  
Long springs and tepid winters, on the banks  
Of delicate Galesus ; and no less  
Those scattered along Adria's myrtle shores :  
Smooth life had herdsman, and his snow-white herd  
To triumphs and to sacrificial rites  
Devoted, on the inviolable stream  
Of rich Clitumnus ; and the goat-herd lived  
As calmly, underneath the pleasant brows  
Of cool Lucretilis, where the pipe was heard  
Of Pan, Invisible God, thrilling the rocks  
With tutelary music, from all harm  
The fold protecting. I myself, mature  
In manhood then, have seen a pastoral tract  
Like one of these, where Fancy might run wild,  
Though under skies less generous, less serene :  
There, for her own delight had Nature framed  
A pleasure-ground, diffused a fair expanse  
Of level pasture, islanded with groves  
And banked with woody risings ; but the Plain  
Endless, here opening widely out, and there  
Shut up in lesser lakes or beds of lawn  
And intricate recesses, creek or bay  
Sheltered within a shelter, where at large  
The shepherd strays, a rolling hut his home.  
Thither he comes with spring-time, there abides  
All summer, and at sunrise ye may hear  
His flageolet to liquid notes of love  
Attuned, or sprightly life resounding far.  
Nook is there none, nor tract of that vast space  
Where passage opens, but the same shall have  
In turn its visitant, telling there his hours  
In unlaborious pleasure, with no task  
More toilsome than to carve a beechen bowl  
For spring or fountain, which the traveller finds,  
When through the region he pursues at will  
His devious course. A glimpse of such sweet life  
I saw when, from the melancholy walls  
Of Goslar, once imperial, I renewed  
My daily walk along that wide champaign,

That, reaching to her gates, spreads east and west,  
And northwards, from beneath the mountainous verge  
Of the Hercynian forest. Yet, hail to you  
Moors, mountains, headlands, and ye hollow vales,  
Ye long deep channels for the Atlantic's voice,  
Powers of my native region! Ye that seize  
The heart with firmer grasp! Your snows and streams  
Ungovernable, and your terrifying winds,  
That howl so dismally for him who treads  
Companionless your awful solitudes!  
There, 'tis the shepherd's task the winter long  
To wait upon the storms: of their approach  
Sagacious, into sheltering coves he drives  
His flock, and thither from the homestead bears  
A toilsome burden up the craggy ways,  
And deals it out, their regular nourishment  
Strewn on the frozen snow. And when the spring  
Looks out, and all the pastures dance with lambs,  
And when the flock, with warmer weather, climbs  
Higher and higher, him his office leads  
To watch their goings, whatsoever track  
The wanderers choose. For this he quits his home  
At day-spring, and no sooner doth the sun  
Begin to strike him with a fire-like heat,  
Than he lies down upon some shining rock,  
And breakfasts with his dog. When they have stolen,  
As is their wont, a pittance from strict time,  
For rest not needed or exchange of love,  
Then from his couch he starts; and now his feet  
Crush out a livelier fragrance from the flowers  
Of lowly thyme, by Nature's skill enwrought  
In the wild turf: the lingering dews of morn  
Smoke round him, as from hill to hill he hies,  
His staff protending like a hunter's spear,  
Or by its aid leaping from crag to crag,  
And o'er the brawling beds of unbridged streams.  
Philosophy, methinks, at Fancy's call,  
Might deign to follow him through what he does  
Or sees in his day's march; himself he feels,  
In those vast regions where his service lies,  
A freeman, wedded to his life of hope  
And hazard, and hard labour interchanged  
With that majestic indolence so dear  
To native man. A rambling schoolboy, thus,  
I felt his presence in his own domain,

As of a lord and master, or a power,  
 Or genius, under Nature, under God,  
 Presiding ; and severest solitude  
 Had more commanding looks when he was there.  
 When up the lonely brooks on rainy days  
 Angling I went, or trod the trackless hills  
 By mists bewildered, suddenly mine eyes  
 Have glanced upon him distant a few steps,  
 In size a giant, stalking through thick fog,  
 His sheep like Greenland bears ; or, as he stepped  
 Beyond the boundary line of some hill-shadow,  
 His form hath flashed upon me, glorified  
 By the deep radiance of the setting sun :  
 Or him have I descried in distant sky,  
 A solitary object and sublime,  
 Above all height I like an aerial cross  
 Stationed alone upon a spiry rock  
 Of the Chartreuse, for worship. Thus was man  
 Ennobled outwardly before my sight,  
 And thus my heart was early introduced  
 To an unconscious love and reverence  
 Of human nature ; hence the human form  
 To me became an index of delight,  
 Of grace and honour, power and worthiness.  
 Meanwhile this creature—spiritual almost  
 As those of books, but more exalted far ;  
 Far more of an imaginative form  
 Than the gay Corin of the groves, who lives  
 For his own fancies, or to dance by the hour,  
 In coronal, with Phyllis in the midst—  
 Was, for the purposes of kind, a man  
 With the most common ; husband, father ; learned,  
 Could teach, admonish ; suffered with the rest  
 From vice and folly, wretchedness and fear ;  
 Of this I little saw, cared less for it,  
 But something must have felt.

Call ye these appearances—  
 Which I beheld of shepherds in my youth,  
 This sanctity of Nature given to man—  
 A shadow, a delusion, ye who pore  
 On the dead letter, miss the spirit of things ;  
 Whose truth is not a motion or a shape  
 Instinct with vital functions, but a block  
 Or waxen image which yourselves have made,  
 And ye adore ! But blessed be the God

Of Nature and of Man that this was so ;  
That men before my inexperienced eyes  
Did first present themselves thus purified,  
Removed, and to a distance that was fit :  
And so we all of us in some degree  
Are led to knowledge, wheresoever led,  
And howsoever ; were it otherwise,  
And we found evil fast as we find good  
In our first years, or think that it is found,  
How could the innocent heart bear up and live !  
But doubly fortunate my lot ; not here  
Alone, that something of a better life  
Perhaps was round me than it is the privilege  
Of most to move in, but that first I looked  
At Man through objects that were great or fair ;  
First communed with him by their help. And thus  
Was founded a sure safeguard and defence  
Against the weight of meanness, selfish cares,  
Coarse manners, vulgar passions, that beat in  
On all sides from the ordinary world  
In which we traffic. Starting from this point  
I had my face turned toward the truth, began  
With an advantage furnished by that kind  
Of prepossession, without which the soul  
Receives no knowledge that can bring forth good,  
No genuine insight ever comes to her.  
From the restraint of over-watchful eyes  
Preserved, I moved about, year after year,  
Happy, and now most thankful that my walk  
Was guarded from too early intercourse  
With the deformities of crowded life,  
And those ensuing laughs and contempts,  
Self-pleasing, which, if we would wish to think  
With a due reverence on earth's rightful lord,  
Here placed to be the inheritor of heaven,  
Will not permit us ; but pursue the mind,  
That to devotion willingly would rise,  
Into the temple and the temple's heart.

Yet deem not, Friend ! that human kind with me  
Thus early took a place pre-eminent ;  
Nature herself was, at this unripe time,  
But secondary to my own pursuits  
And animal activities, and all  
Their trivial pleasures ; and when these had drooped

And gradually expired, and Nature, prized  
 For her own sake, became my joy, even then—  
 And upwards through late youth, until not less  
 Than two-and-twenty summers had been told—  
 Was Man in my affections and regards  
 Subordinate to her, her visible forms  
 And viewless agencies: a passion, she,  
 A rapture often, and immediate love  
 Ever at hand; he, only a delight  
 Occasional, an accidental grace,  
 His hour being not yet come. Far less had then  
 The inferior creatures, beast or bird, attuned  
 My spirit to that gentleness of love,  
 (Though they had long been carefully observed),  
 Won from me those minute obeisances  
 Of tenderness, which I may number now  
 With my first blessings. Nevertheless, on these  
 The light of beauty did not fall in vain,  
 Or grandeur circumfuse them to no end.

But when that first poetic faculty  
 Of plain Imagination and severe,  
 No longer a mute influence of the soul,  
 Ventured, at some rash Muse's earnest call,  
 To try her strength among harmonious words;  
 And to book-notions and the rules of art  
 Did knowingly conform itself; there came  
 Among the simple shapes of human life  
 A wilfulness of fancy and conceit;  
 And Nature and her objects beautified  
 These fictions, as in some sort, in their turn,  
 They burnished her. From touch of this new power  
 Nothing was safe: the elder-tree that grew  
 Beside the well-known charnel-house had then  
 A dismal look: the yew-tree had its ghost,  
 That took his station there for ornament:  
 The dignities of plain occurrence then  
 Were tasteless, and truth's golden mean, a point  
 Where no sufficient pleasure could be found.  
 Then, if a widow, staggering with the blow  
 Of her distress, was known to have turned her steps  
 To the cold grave in which her husband slept,  
 One night, or haply more than one, through pain  
 Or half-insensate impotence of mind,  
 The fact was caught at greedily, and there

She must be visitant the whole year through,  
Wetting the turf with never-ending tears.

Through quaint obliquities I might pursue  
These cravings ; when the foxglove, one by one,  
Upwards through every stage of the tall stem,  
Had shed beside the public way its bells,  
And stood of all dismantled, save the last  
Left at the tapering ladder's top, that seemed  
To bend as doth a slender blade of grass  
Tipped with a rain-drop, Fancy loved to seat,  
Beneath the plant despoiled, but crested still  
With this last relic, soon itself to fall,  
Some vagrant mother, whose arch little ones,  
All unconcerned by her dejected plight,  
Laughed as with rival eagerness their hands  
Gathered the purple cups that round them lay,  
Strewing the turf's green slope.

A diamond light  
(Whene'er the summer sun, declining, smote  
A smooth rock wet with constant springs) was seen  
Sparkling from out a copse-clad bank that rose  
Fronting our cottage. Oft beside the hearth  
Seated, with open door, often and long  
Upon this restless lustre have I gazed,  
That made my fancy restless as itself.  
'Twas now for me a burnished silver shield  
Suspended over a knight's tomb, who lay  
Inglorious, buried in the dusky wood :  
An entrance now into some magic cave  
Or palace built by fairies of the rock ;  
Nor could I have been bribed to disenchant  
The spectacle, by visiting the spot.  
Thus wilful Fancy, in no hurtful mood,  
Engrafted far-fetched shapes on feelings bred  
By pure Imagination : busy Power  
She was, and with her ready pupil turned  
Instinctively to human passions, then  
Least understood. Yet, 'mid the fervent swarm  
Of these vagaries, with an eye so rich  
As mine was through the bounty of a grand  
And lovely region, I had forms distinct  
To steady me : each airy thought revolved  
Round a substantial centre, which at once  
Incited it to motion, and controlled.

I did not pine like one in cities bred,  
 As was thy melancholy lot, dear Friend !  
 Great Spirit as thou art, in endless dreams  
 Of sickness, disjoining, joining, things  
 Without the light of knowledge. Where the harm,  
 If, when the woodman languished with disease  
 Induced by sleeping nightly on the ground  
 Within his sod-built cabin, Indian-wise,  
 I called the pangs of disappointed love,  
 And all the sad etcetera of the wrong,  
 To help him to his grave ? Meanwhile the man,  
 If not already from the woods retired  
 To die at home, was haply, as I knew,  
 Withering by slow degrees, 'mid gentle airs,  
 Birds, running streams, and hills so beautiful  
 On golden evenings, while the charcoal pile  
 Breathed up its smoke, an image of his ghost  
 Or spirit that full soon must take her flight.  
 Nor shall we not be tending towards that point  
 Of sound humanity to which our Tale  
 Leads, though by sinuous ways, if here I show  
 How Fancy, in a season when she wove  
 Those slender cords, to guide the unconscious Boy  
 For the Man's sake, could feed at Nature's call  
 Some pensive musings which might well beseem  
 Maturer years.

A grove there is whose boughs  
 Stretch from the western marge of Thurstonmere,  
 With length of shade so thick, that whoso glides  
 Along the line of low-roofed water, moves  
 As in a cloister. Once—while, in that shade  
 Loitering, I watched the golden beams of light  
 Flung from the setting sun, as they reposed  
 In silent beauty on the naked ridge  
 Of a high eastern hill—thus flowed my thoughts  
 In a pure stream of words fresh from the heart :  
 Dear native Regions, wheresoe'er shall close  
 My mortal course, there will I think on you ;  
 Dying, will cast on you a backward look ;  
 Even as this setting sun (albeit the Vale  
 Is no where touched by one memorial gleam)  
 Doth with the fond remains of his last power  
 Still linger, and a farewell lustre sheds,  
 On the dear mountain-tops where first he rose.

Enough of humble arguments ; recall,  
My Song ! those high emotions which thy voice  
Has heretofore made known ; that bursting forth  
Of sympathy, inspiring and inspired,  
When everywhere a vital pulse was felt,  
And all the several frames of things, like stars,  
Through every magnitude distinguishable,  
Shone mutually indebted, or half lost  
Each in the other's blaze, a galaxy  
Of life and glory. In the midst stood Man,  
Outwardly, inwardly contemplated,  
As, of all visible natures, crown, though born  
Of dust, and kindred to the worm ; a Being,  
Both in perception and discernment, first  
In every capability of rapture,  
Through the divine effect of power and love ;  
As, more than anything we know, instinct  
With godhead, and, by reason and by will,  
Acknowledging dependency sublime.

Ere long, the lonely mountains left, I moved,  
Begirt, from day to day, with temporal shapes  
Of vice and folly thrust upon my view,  
Objects of sport, and ridicule, and scorn,  
Manners and characters discriminate,  
And little bustling passions that eclipse,  
As well they might, the impersonated thought,  
The idea, or abstraction of the kind.

An idler among academic bowers,  
Such was my new condition, as at large  
Has been set forth ; yet here the vulgar light,  
Of present, actual, superficial life,  
Gleaming through colouring of other times,  
Old usages and local privilege,  
Was welcomed, softened, if not solemnised.  
This notwithstanding, being brought more near  
To vice and guilt, forerunning wretchedness,  
I trembled,—thought, at times, of human life  
With an indefinite terror and dismay,  
Such as the storms and angry elements  
Had bred in me ; but gloomier far, a dim  
Analogy to uproar and misrule,  
Disquiet, danger, and obscurity.

It might be told (but wherefore speak of things

Common to all?) that, seeing, I was led  
 Gravely to ponder—judging between good  
 And evil, not as for the mind's delight  
 But for her guidance—one who was to *act*,  
 As sometimes to the best of feeble means  
 I did, by human sympathy impelled :  
 And, through dislike and most offensive pain,  
 Was to the truth conducted ; of this faith  
 Never forsaken, that, by acting well,  
 And understanding, I should learn to love  
 The end of life, and everything we know.

Grave Teacher, stern Preceptress ! for at times  
 Thou canst put on an aspect most severe ;  
 London, to thee I willingly return.  
 Brewhile my verse played idly with the flowers  
 Enwrought upon thy mantle ; satisfied  
 With that amusement, and a simple look  
 Of child-like inquisition now and then  
 Cast upwards on thy countenance, to detect  
 Some inner meanings which might harbour there.  
 But how could I in mood so light indulge,  
 Keeping such fresh remembrance of the day,  
 When, having thriddled the long labyrinth  
 Of the suburban villages, I first  
 Entered thy vast dominion ? On the roof  
 Of an itinerant vehicle I sat,  
 With vulgar men about me, trivial forms  
 Of houses, pavement, streets, of men and things,—  
 Mean shapes on every side : but, at the instant,  
 When to myself it fairly might be said,  
 The threshold now is overpast, (how strange  
 That aught external to the living mind  
 Should have such mighty sway ! yet so it was),  
 A weight of ages did at once descend  
 Upon my heart ; no thought embodied, no  
 Distinct remembrances, but weight and power,—  
 Power growing under weight : alas ! I feel  
 That I am trifling : 'twas a moment's pause,—  
 All that took place within me came and went  
 As in a moment ; yet with Time it dwells,  
 And grateful memory, as a thing divine.

The curious traveller, who, from open day,  
 Hath passed with torches into some huge cave,  
 The Grotto of Antiparos, or the Den

In old time haunted by that Danish witch,  
Yordas ; he looks around and sees the vault  
Widening on all sides ; sees, or thinks he sees,  
Erelong, the massy roof above his head,  
That instantly unsettles and recedes,—  
Substance and shadow, light and darkness, all  
Commingle, making up a canopy  
Of shapes and forms and tendencies to shape  
That shift and vanish, change and interchange  
Like spectres,—ferment silent and sublime !  
That after a short space works less and less,  
Till, every effort, every motion gone,  
The scene before him stands in perfect view  
Exposed, and lifeless as a written book !—  
But let him pause awhile, and look again,  
And a new quickening shall succeed, at first  
Beginning timidly, then creeping fast,  
Till the whole cave, so late a senseless mass,  
Busies the eye with images and forms  
Boldly assembled,—here is shadowed forth  
From the projections, wrinkles, cavities,  
A variegated landscape,—there the shape  
Of some gigantic warrior clad in mail,  
The ghostly semblance of a hooded monk,  
Veiled nun, or pilgrim resting on his staff :  
Strange congregation ! yet not slow to meet  
Eyes that perceive through minds that can inspire.

Even in such sort had I at first been moved,  
Nor otherwise continued to be moved,  
As I explored the vast metropolis,  
Fount of my country's destiny and the world's ;  
That great emporium, chronicle at once  
And burial-place of passions, and their home  
Imperial, their chief living residence.

With strong sensations teeming as it did  
Of past and present, such a place must needs  
Have pleased me, seeking knowledge at that time  
Far less than craving power ; yet knowledge came,  
Sought or unsought, and influxes of power  
Came, of themselves, or at her call derived  
In fits of kindest apprehensiveness,  
From all sides, when whate'er was in itself  
Capacious found, or seemed to find, in me  
A correspondent amplitude of mind ;

Such is the strength and glory of our youth !  
The human nature unto which I felt  
That I belonged, and revered with love,  
Was not a punctual presence, but a spirit  
Diffused through time and space, with aid derived  
Of evidence from monuments, erect,  
Prostrate, or leaning towards their common rest  
In earth, the widely scattered wreck sublime  
Of vanished nations, or more clearly drawn  
From books and what they picture and record.

'Tis true, the history of our native land—  
With those of Greece compared and popular Rome,  
And in our high-wrought modern narratives  
Stript of their harmonising soul, the life  
Of manners and familiar incidents—  
Had never much delighted me. And less  
Than other intellects had mine been used  
To lean upon extrinsic circumstance  
Of record or tradition ; but a sense  
Of what in the Great City had been done  
And suffered, and was doing, suffering, still,  
Weighed with me, could support the test of thought ;  
And, in despite of all that had gone by,  
Or was departing never to return,  
There I conversed with majesty and power  
Like independent natures. Hence the place  
Was thronged with impregnations like the Wilds  
In which my early feelings had been nursed—  
Bare hills and valleys, full of caverns, rocks,  
And audible seclusions, dashing lakes,  
Echoes and waterfalls, and pointed crags  
That into music touch the passing wind.  
Here then my young imagination found  
No uncongenial element ; could here  
Among new objects serve or give command,  
Even as the heart's occasions might require,  
To forward reason's else too-scrupulous march.  
The effect was, still more elevated views  
Of human nature. Neither vice nor guilt,  
Debasement undergone by body or mind,  
Nor all the misery forced upon my sight,  
Misery not lightly passed, but sometimes scanned  
Most feelingly, could overthrow my trust  
In what we *may* become ; induce belief

That I was ignorant, had been falsely taught,  
 A solitary, who with vain conceits  
 Had been inspired, and walked about in dreams,  
 From those sad scenes when meditation turned,  
 Lo! everything that was indeed divine  
 Retained its purity inviolate,  
 Nay brighter shone, by this portentous gloom  
 Set off; such opposition as aroused  
 The mind of Adam, yet in Paradise  
 Though fallen from bliss, when in the East he saw  
<sup>1</sup> Darkness ere day's mid course, and morning light  
 More orient in the western cloud, that drew  
 O'er the blue firmament a radiant white,  
 Descending slow with something heavenly fraught.

Add also, that among the multitudes  
 Of that huge city, oftentimes was seen  
 Affectingly set forth, more than elsewhere  
 Is possible, the unity of man,  
 One spirit over ignorance and vice  
 Predominant, in good and evil hearts;  
 One sense for moral judgments, as one eye  
 For the sun's light. The soul when smitten thus  
 By a sublime *idea*, whence so'er  
 Vouchsafed for union or communion, feeds  
 On the pure bliss, and takes her rest with God.

Thus from a very early age, O Friend!  
 My thoughts by slow gradations had been drawn  
 To human-kind, and to the good and ill  
 Of human life: Nature had led me on;  
 And oft amid the "busy hum" I seemed  
 To travel independent of her help,  
 As if I had forgotten her; but no,  
 The world of human-kind outweighed not hers  
 In my habitual thoughts; the scale of love,  
 Though filling daily, still was light, compared  
 With that in which *her* mighty objects lay.

## BOOK NINTH

## RESIDENCE IN FRANCE

EVEN as a river,—partly (it might seem)  
 Yielding to old remembrances, and swayed  
 In part by fear to shape a way direct,

<sup>1</sup> From Milton, *Par. Lost*, xl. 204.

That would engulf him soon in the ravenous sea—  
Turns, and will measure back his course, far back,  
Seeking the very regions which he crossed  
In his first outset ; so have we, my Friend !  
Turned and returned with intricate delay.  
Or as a traveller, who has gained the brow  
Of some aerial Down, while there he halts  
For breathing-time, is tempted to review  
The regions left behind him ; and, if aught  
Deserving notice have escaped regard,  
Or been regarded with too careless eye,  
Strives, from that height, with one and yet one more  
Last look, to make the best amends he may :  
So have we lingered. Now we start afresh  
With courage, and new hope risen on our toil.  
Fair greetings to this shapeless eagerness,  
Whene'er it comes ! needful in work so long,  
Thrice needful to the argument which now  
Awaits us ! Oh, how much unlike the past !

Free as a colt at pasture on the hill,  
I ranged at large, through London's wide domain,  
Month after month. Obscurely did I live,  
Not seeking frequent intercourse with men,  
By literature, or elegance, or rank,  
Distinguished. Scarcely was a year thus spent  
Ere I forsook the crowded solitude,  
With less regret for its luxurious pomp,  
And all the nicely-guarded shows of art,  
Than for the humble book-stalls in the streets,  
Exposed to eye and hand where'er I turned.

France lured me forth ; the realm that I had crossed  
So lately, journeying toward the snow-clad Alps.  
But now, relinquishing the scrip and staff,  
And all enjoyment which the summer sun  
Sheds round the steps of those who meet the day  
With motion constant as his own, I went  
Prepared to sojourn in a pleasant town,  
Washed by the current of the stately Loire.

Through Paris lay my readiest course, and there  
Sojourning a few days, I visited  
In haste, each spot of old or recent fame,  
The latter chiefly ; from the field of Mars  
Down to the suburbs of St. Antony,

And from Mont Martre southward to the Dome  
Of Geneviève. In both her clamorous Halls,  
The National Synod and the Jacobins,  
I saw the Revolutionary Power  
Toss like a ship at anchor, rocked by storms,  
The Arcades I traversed, in the Palace huge  
Of Orleans; coasted round and round the line  
Of Tavern, Brothel, Gaming-house, and Shop,  
Great rendezvous of worst and best, the walk  
Of all who had a purpose, or had not;  
I stared and listened, with a stranger's ears,  
To Hawkers, and Haranguers, hubbub wild!  
And hissing Factionists with ardent eyes,  
In knots, or pairs, or single. Not a look  
Hope takes, or Doubt or Fear is forced to wear,  
But seemed there present; and I scanned them all,  
Watched every gesture uncontrollable,  
Of anger, and vexation, and despite,  
All side by side, and struggling face to face,  
With gaiety and dissolute idleness.

Where silent zephyrs sported with the dust  
Of the Bastille, I sate in the open sun,  
And from the rubbish gathered up a stone,  
And pocketed the relic, in the guise  
Of an enthusiast; yet, in honest truth,  
I looked for something that I could not find,  
Affecting more emotion than I felt;  
For 'tis most certain, that these various sights,  
However potent their first shock, with me  
Appeared to recompense the traveller's pains  
Less than the painted Magdalene of Le Brun,  
A beauty exquisitely wrought, with hair  
Dishevelled, gleaming eyes, and rueful cheek  
Pale and bedropped with overflowing tears.

But hence to my more permanent abode  
I hasten; there, by novelties in speech,  
Domestic manners, customs, gestures, looks,  
And all the attire of ordinary life,  
Attention was engrossed; and, thus amused,  
I stood 'mid those concussions, unconcerned,  
Tranquil almost, and careless as a flower  
Glassed in a green-house, or a parlour shrub  
That spreads its leaves in unmolested peace,

While every bush and tree, the country through,  
Is shaking to the roots: indifference this  
Which may seem strange: but I was unprepared  
With needful knowledge, had abruptly passed  
Into a theatre, whose stage was filled  
And busy with an action far advanced.  
Like others, I had skimmed, and sometimes read  
With care, the master pamphlets of the day;  
Nor wanted such half-insight as grew wild  
Upon that meagre soil, helped out by talk  
And public news; but having never seen  
A chronicle that might suffice to show  
Whence the main organs of the public power  
Had sprung, their transmigrations, when and how  
Accomplished, giving thus unto events  
A form and body; all things were to me  
Loose and disjointed, and the affections left  
Without a vital interest. At that time,  
Moreover, the first storm was overblown,  
And the strong hand of outward violence  
Locked up in quiet. For myself, I fear  
Now, in connection with so great a theme,  
To speak (as I must be compelled to do)  
Of one so unimportant; night by night  
Did I frequent the formal haunts of men,  
Whom, in the city, privilege of birth  
Sequestered from the rest, societies  
Polished in arts, and in punctilio versed;  
Whence, and from deeper causes, all discourse  
Of good and evil of the time was shunned  
With scrupulous care; but these restrictions soon  
Proved tedious, and I gradually withdrew  
Into a noisier world, and thus ere long  
Became a patriot; and my heart was all  
Given to the people, and my love was theirs.

A band of military Officers,  
Then stationed in the city, were the chief  
Of my associates: some of these wore swords  
That had been seasoned in the wars, and all  
Were men well-born; the chivalry of France.  
In age and temper differing, they had yet  
One spirit ruling in each heart; alike  
(Save only one, hereafter to be named)  
Were bent upon undoing what was done:

This was their rest and only hope ; therewith  
No fear had they of bad becoming worse,  
For worst to them was come ; nor would have stirred,  
Or deemed it worth a moment's thought to stir,  
In anything, save only as the act  
Looked thitherward. One, reckoning by years,  
Was in the prime of manhood, and erewhile  
He had sate lord in many tender hearts ;  
Though heedless of such honours now, and changed :  
His temper was quite mastered by the times,  
And they had blighted him, had eaten away  
The beauty of his person, doing wrong  
Alike to body and to mind : his port,  
Which once had been erect and open, now  
Was stooping and contracted, and a face,  
Endowed by Nature with her fairest gifts  
Of symmetry and light and bloom, expressed,  
As much as any that was ever seen,  
A ravage out of season, made by thoughts  
Unhealthy and vexatious. With the hour,  
That from the press of Paris duly brought  
Its freight of public news, the fever came,  
A punctual visitant, to shake this man,  
Disarmed his voice and fanned his yellow cheek  
Into a thousand colours ; while he read,  
Or mused, his sword was haunted by his touch  
Continually, like an uneasy place  
In his own body. 'Twas in truth an hour  
Of universal ferment ; mildest men  
Were agitated ; and commotions, strife  
Of passion and opinion, filled the walls  
Of peaceful houses with unquiet sounds.  
The soil of common life was, at that time,  
Too hot to tread upon. Oft said I then,  
And not then only, "What a mockery this  
Of history, the past and that to come!  
Now do I feel how all men are deceived,  
Reading of nations and their works, in faith,  
Faith given to vanity and emptiness ;  
Oh ! laughter for the page that would reflect  
To future times the face of what now is !"  
The land all swarmed with passion, like a plain  
Devoured by locusts,—Carra, Gorsas,—add  
A hundred other names, forgotten now,  
Nor to be heard of more ; yet, they were powers,

Like earthquakes, shocks repeated day by day,  
And felt through every nook of town and field.

Such was the state of things. Meanwhile the chief  
Of my associates stood prepared for flight  
To augment the band of emigrants in arms  
Upon the borders of the Rhine, and leagued  
With foreign foes mustered for instant war.  
This was their undisguised intent, and they  
Were waiting with the whole of their desires  
The moment to depart.

An Englishman,  
Born in a land whose very name appeared  
To license some unruliness of mind ;  
A stranger, with youth's further privilege,  
And the indulgence that a half-learn't speech  
Wins from the courteous ; I, who had been else  
Shunned and not tolerated, freely lived  
With these defenders of the Crown, and talked,  
And heard their notions ; nor did they disdain  
The wish to bring me over to their cause.

But though untaught by thinking or by books  
To reason well of polity or law,  
And nice distinctions, then on every tongue,  
Of natural rights and civil ; and to acts  
Of nations and their passing interests,  
(If with unworldly ends and aims compared)  
Almost indifferent, even the historian's tale  
Prizing but little otherwise than I prized  
Tales of the poets, as it made the heart  
Beat high, and filled the fancy with fair forms,  
Old heroes and their sufferings and their deeds ;  
Yet in the regal sceptre, and the pomp  
Of orders and degrees, I nothing found  
Then, or had ever, even in crudest youth,  
That dazzled me, but rather what I mourned  
And ill could brook, beholding that the best  
Ruled not, and feeling that they ought to rule.

For, born in a poor district, and which yet  
Retaineth more of ancient homeliness,  
Than any other nook of English ground,  
It was my fortune scarcely to have seen,  
Through the whole tenor of my school-day time,  
The face of one, who, whether boy or man,

Was vested with attention or respect  
Through claims of wealth or blood ; nor was it least  
Of many benefits, in later years  
Derived from academic institutes  
And rules, that they held something up to view  
Of a Republic, where all stood thus far  
Upon equal ground ; that we were brothers all  
In honour, as in one community,  
Scholars and gentlemen ; where, furthermore,  
Distinction open lay to all that came,  
And wealth and titles were in less esteem  
Than talents, worth, and prosperous industry.  
Add unto this, subservience from the first  
To presences of God's mysterious power  
Made manifest in Nature's sovereignty,  
And fellowship with venerable books,  
To sanction the proud workings of the soul,  
And mountain liberty. It could not be  
But that one tutored thus should look with awe  
Upon the faculties of man, receive  
Gladly the highest promises, and hail,  
As best, the government of equal rights  
And individual worth. And hence, O Friend !  
If at the first great outbreak I rejoiced  
Less than might well befit my youth, the cause  
In part lay here, that unto me the events  
Seemed nothing out of nature's certain course,  
A gift that was come rather late than soon.  
No wonder, then, if advocates like these,  
Inflamed by passion, blind with prejudice,  
And stung with injury, at this riper day,  
Were impotent to make my hopes put on  
The shape of theirs, my understanding bend  
In honour to their honour : zeal, which yet  
Had slumbered, now in opposition burst  
Forth like a Polar summer : every word  
They uttered was a dart, by counter-winds  
Blown back upon themselves ; their reason seemed  
Confusion-stricken by a higher power  
Than human understanding, their discourse  
Maimed, spiritless ; and, in their weakness strong,  
I triumphed.

Meantime, day by day, the roads  
Were crowded with the bravest youth of France,  
And all the promptest of her spirits, linked

In gallant soldiership, and posting on  
To meet the war upon her frontier bounds.  
Yet at this very moment do tears start  
Into mine eyes: I do not say I weep—  
I wept not then,—but tears have dimmed my sight,  
In memory of the farewells of that time,  
Domestic severings, female fortitude  
At dearest separation, patriot love  
And self-devotion, and terrestrial hope,  
Encouraged with a martyr's confidence;  
Even files of strangers merely seen but once,  
And for a moment, men from far with sound  
Of music, martial tunes, and banners spread,  
Entering the city, here and there a face,  
Or person, singled out among the rest,  
Yet still a stranger and beloved as such;  
Even by these passing spectacles my heart  
Was oftentimes uplifted, and they seemed  
Arguments sent from Heaven to prove the cause  
Good, pure, which no one could stand up against,  
Who was not lost, abandoned, selfish, proud,  
Mean, miserable, wilfully depraved,  
Hater perverse of equity and truth.

Among that band of Officers was one,  
Already hinted at, of other mould—  
A patriot, thence rejected by the rest,  
And with an oriental loathing spurned,  
As of a different caste. A meeker man  
Than this lived never, nor a more benign,  
Meek though enthusiastic. Injuries  
Made *him* more gracious, and his nature then  
Did breathe its sweetness out most sensibly,  
As aromatic flowers on Alpine turf,  
When foot hath crushed them. He through the events  
Of that great change wandered in perfect faith,  
As through a book, an old romance, or tale  
Of Fairy, or some dream of actions wrought  
Behind the summer clouds. By birth he ranked  
With the most noble, but unto the poor  
Among mankind he was in service bound,  
As by some tie invisible, oaths professed  
To a religious order. Man he loved  
As man; and, to the mean and the obscure,  
And all the homely in their homely works,

Transferred a courtesy which had no air  
Of condescension ; but did rather seem  
A passion and a gallantry, like that  
Which he, a soldier, in his idler day  
Had paid to woman : somewhat vain he was,  
Or seemed so, yet it was not vanity,  
But fondness, and a kind of radiant joy  
Diffused around him, while he was intent  
On works of love or freedom, or revolved  
Complacently the progress of a cause,  
Whereof he was a part : yet this was meek  
And placid, and took nothing from the man  
That was delightful. Oft in solitude  
With him did I discourse about the end  
Of civil government, and its wisest forms ;  
Of ancient loyalty, and chartered rights,  
Custom and habit, novelty and change ;  
Of self-respect, and virtue in the few  
For patrimonial honour set apart,  
And ignorance in the labouring multitude.  
For he, to all intolerance indisposed,  
Balanced these contemplations in his mind ;  
And I, who at that time was scarcely dipped  
Into the turmoil, bore a sounder judgment  
Than later days allowed ; carried about me,  
With less alloy to its integrity,  
The experience of past ages, as, through help  
Of books and common life, it makes sure way  
To youthful minds, by objects over near  
Not pressed upon, nor dazzled or misled  
By struggling with the crowd for present ends.

But though not deaf, nor obstinate to find  
Error without excuse upon the side  
Of them who strove against us, more delight  
We took, and let this freely be confessed,  
In painting to ourselves the miseries  
Of royal courts, and that voluptuous life  
Unfeeling, where the man who is of soul  
The meanest thrives the most ; where dignity,  
True personal dignity, abideth not ;  
A light, a cruel, and vain world cut off  
From the natural inlets of just sentiment,  
From lowly sympathy and chastening truth ;  
Where good and evil interchange their names,

And thirst for bloody spoils abroad is paired  
 With vice at home. We added dearest themes—  
 Man and his noble nature, as it is  
 The gift which God has placed within his power,  
 His blind desires and steady faculties  
 Capable of clear truth, the one to break  
 Bondage, the other to build liberty  
 On firm foundations, making social life,  
 Through knowledge spreading and imperishable,  
 As just in regulation, and as pure  
 As individual in the wise and good.

We summoned up the honourable deeds  
 Of ancient Story, thought of each bright spot,  
 That would be found in all recorded time,  
 Of truth preserved and error passed away;  
 Of single spirits that catch the flame from Heaven,  
 And how the multitudes of men will feed  
 And fan each other; thought of sects, how keen  
 They are to put the appropriate nature on,  
 Triumphant over every obstacle  
 Of custom, language, country, love, or hate,  
 And what they do and suffer for their creed;  
 How far they travel, and how long endure;  
 How quickly mighty Nations have been formed,  
 From least beginnings; how, together locked  
 By new opinions, scattered tribes have made  
 One body, spreading wide as clouds in heaven.  
 To aspirations then of our own minds  
 Did we appeal; and, finally, beheld  
 A living confirmation of the whole  
 Before us, in a people from the depth  
 Of shameful imbecility uprisen,  
 Fresh as the morning star. Elate we looked  
 Upon their virtues; saw, in rudest men,  
 Self-sacrifice the firmest; generous love,  
 And continence of mind, and sense of right,  
 Uppermost in the midst of fiercest strife.

Oh, sweet it is, in academic groves,  
 Or such retirement, Friend! as we have known  
 In the green dales beside our Rotha's stream,  
 Greta, or Derwent, or some nameless rill,  
 To ruminate, with interchange of talk,  
 On rational liberty, and hope in man,  
 Justice and peace. But far more sweet such toil—

Toil, say I, for it leads to thoughts abstruse—  
If nature then be standing on the brink  
Of some great trial, and we hear the voice  
Of one devoted,—one whom circumstance  
Hath called upon to embody his deep sense  
In action, give it outwardly a shape,  
And that of benediction, to the world.  
Then doubt is not, and truth is more than truth,—  
A hope it is, and a desire ; a creed  
Of zeal, by an authority Divine  
Sanctioned, of danger, difficulty, or death.  
Such conversation, under Attic shades,  
Did Dion hold with Plato ; ripened thus  
For a Deliverer's glorious task,—and such  
He, on that ministry already bound,  
Held with Eudemus and Timonides,  
Surrounded by adventurers in arms,  
When those two vessels with their daring freight,  
For the Sicilian Tyrant's overthrow,  
Sailed from Zacynthus,—philosophic war,  
Led by Philosophers. With harder fate,  
Though like ambition, such was he, O Friend !  
Of whom I speak. So Beupuis (let the name  
Stand near the worthiest of Antiquity)  
Fashioned his life ; and many a long discourse,  
With like persuasion honoured, we maintained :  
He, on his part, accoutred for the worst,  
He perished fighting, in supreme command,  
Upon the borders of the unhappy Loire,  
For liberty, against deluded men,  
His fellow-countrymen ; and yet most blessed  
In this, that he the fate of later times  
Lived not to see, nor what we now behold,  
Who have as ardent hearts as he had then.

Along that very Loire, with festal mirth  
Resounding at all hours, and innocent yet  
Of civil slaughter, was our frequent walk ;  
Or in wide forests of continuous shade,  
Lofty and over-arched, with open space  
Beneath the trees, clear footing many a mile—  
A solemn region. Oft amid those haunts,  
From earnest dialogues I slipped in thought,  
And let remembrance steal to other times,  
When, o'er those interwoven roots, moss-clad,

And smooth as marble or a waveless sea,  
Some Hermit, from his cell forth-strayed, might pace  
In sylvan meditation undisturbed ;  
As on the pavement of a Gothic church  
Walks a lone Monk, when service hath expired,  
In peace and silence. But if e'er was heard,—  
Heard, though unseen,—a devious traveller,  
Retiring or approaching from afar  
With speed and echoes loud of trampling hoofs  
From the hard floor reverberated, then  
It was Angelica thundering through the woods  
Upon her palfrey, or that gentle maid  
Erminia, fugitive as fair as she.  
Sometimes methought I saw a pair of knights  
Joust underneath the trees, that as in storm  
Rocked high above their heads ; anon, the din  
Of boisterous merriment, and music's roar,  
In sudden proclamation, burst from haunt  
Of Satyrs in some viewless glade, with dance  
Rejoicing o'er a female in the midst,  
A mortal beauty, their unhappy thrall.  
The width of those huge forests, unto me  
A novel scene, did often in this way  
Master my fancy while I wandered on  
With that revered companion. And sometimes—  
When to a convent in a meadow green,  
By a brook-side, we came, a roofless pile,  
And not by reverential touch of Time  
Dismantled, but by violence abrupt—  
In spite of those heart-bracing colloquies,  
In spite of real fervour, and of that  
Less genuine and wrought up within myself—  
I could not but bewail a wrong so harsh,  
And for the Matin-bell to sound no more  
Grieved, and the twilight taper, and the cross  
High on the topmost pinnacle, a sign  
(How welcome to the weary traveller's eyes !)  
Of hospitality and peaceful rest.  
And when the partner of those varied walks  
Pointed upon occasion to the site  
Of Romorentin, home of ancient kings,  
To the imperial edifice of Blois,  
Or to that rural castle, name now slipped  
From my remembrance, where a lady lodged,  
By the first Francis wooed, and bound to him

In chains of mutual passion, from the tower,  
As a tradition of the country tells,  
Practised to commune with her royal knight  
By cressets and love-beacons, intercourse  
Twixt her high-seated residence and his  
Far off at Chambord on the plain beneath ;  
Even here, though less than with the peaceful house  
Religious, 'mid those frequent monuments  
Of Kings, their vices and their better deeds,  
Imagination, potent to inflame  
At times with virtuous wrath and noble scorn,  
Did also often mitigate the force  
Of civic prejudice, the bigotry,  
So call it, of a youthful patriot's mind ;  
And on these spots with many gleams I looked  
Of chivalrous delight. Yet not the less,  
Hatred of absolute rule, where will of one  
Is law for all, and of that barren pride  
In them who, by immunities unjust,  
Between the sovereign and the people stand,  
His helper and not theirs, laid stronger hold  
Daily upon me, mixed with pity too  
And love ; for where hope is, there love will be  
For the abject multitude. And when we chanced  
One day to meet a hunger-bitten girl,  
Who crept along fitting her languid gait  
Unto a heifer's motion, by a cord  
Tied to her arm, and picking thus from the lane  
Its sustenance, while the girl with pallid hands  
Was busy knitting in a heartless mood  
Of solitude, and at the sight my friend  
In agitation said, " 'Tis against *that*  
That we are fighting," I with him believed  
That a benignant spirit was abroad  
Which might not be withstood, that poverty  
Abject as this would in a little time  
Be found no more, that we should see the earth  
Unthwarted in her wish to recompense  
The meek, the lowly, patient child of toil,  
All institutes for ever blotted out  
That legalised exclusion, empty pomp  
Abolished, sensual state and cruel power  
Whether by edict of the one or few ;  
And finally, as sun and crown of all,  
Should see the people having a strong hand

In framing their own laws ; whence better days  
 To all mankind. But, these things set apart,  
 Was not this single confidence enough  
 To animate the mind that ever turned  
 A thought to human welfare ? That henceforth  
 Captivity by mandate without law  
 Should cease ; and open accusation lead  
 To sentence in the hearing of the world,  
 And open punishment, if not the air  
 Be free to breathe in, and the heart of man  
 Dread nothing. From this height I shall not stoop  
 To humbler matter that detained us oft  
 In thought or conversation, public acts,  
 And public persons, and emotions wrought  
 Within the breast, as ever-varying winds  
 Of record or report swept over us ;  
 But I might here, instead, repeat a tale,<sup>1</sup>  
 Told by my Patriot friend, of sad events,  
 That prove to what low depth had struck the roots,  
 How widely spread the boughs, of that old tree  
 Which, as a deadly mischief, and a foul  
 And black dishonour, France was weary of.

Oh, happy time of youthful lovers, (thus  
 The story might begin,) oh, balmy time,  
 In which a love-knot, on a lady's brow,  
 Is fairer than the fairest star in Heaven !  
 So might—and with that prelude *did* begin  
 The record ; and, in faithful verse, was given  
 The doleful sequel.

But our little bark  
 On a strong river boldly hath been launched ;  
 And from the driving current should we turn  
 To loiter wilfully within a creek,  
 Howe'er attractive, Fellow voyager !  
 Would'st thou not chide ? Yet deem not my pains lost :  
 For Vaudracour and Julia (so were named  
 The ill-fated pair) in that plain tale will draw  
 Tears from the hearts of others, when their own  
 Shall beat no more. Thou, also, there may'st read,  
 At leisure, how the enamoured youth was driven,  
 By public power abased, to fatal crime,  
 Nature's rebellion against monstrous law ;  
 How, between heart and heart, oppression thrust

<sup>1</sup> See "Vaudracour and Julia."

Her mandates, severing whom true love had joined,  
Harassing both ; until he sank and pressed  
The couch his fate had made for him ; supine,  
Save when the stings of viperous remorse,  
Trying their strength, enforced him to start up,  
Aghast and prayerless. Into a deep wood  
He fled, to shun the haunts of human kind ;  
There dwelt, weakened in spirit more and more ;  
Nor could the voice of Freedom, which through France  
Full speedily resounded, public hope,  
Or personal memory of his own worst wrongs,  
Rouse him ; but, hidden in those gloomy shades,  
His days he wasted,—an imbecile mind.

## BOOK TENTH

RESIDENCE IN FRANCE (*continued*)

It was a beautiful and silent day  
That overspread the countenance of earth  
Then fading with unusual quietness.—  
A day as beautiful as e'er was given  
To soothe regret, though deepening what it soothed,  
When by the gliding Loire I paused, and cast  
Upon his rich domains, vineyard and tilth,  
Green meadow-ground, and many-coloured woods,  
Again, and yet again, a farewell look ;  
Then from the quiet of that scene passed on,  
Bound to the fierce Metropolis. From his throne  
The King had fallen, and that invading host—  
Presumptuous cloud, on whose black front was written  
The tender mercies of the dismal wind  
That bore it—on the plains of Liberty  
Had burst innocuous. Say in bolder words,  
They—who had come elate as eastern hunters  
Banded beneath the Great Mogul, when he  
Erewhile went forth from Agra or Lahore,  
Rajahs and Omrahs in his train, intent  
To drive their prey enclosed within a ring  
Wide as a province, but, the signal given,  
Before the point of the life-threatening spear  
Narrowing itself by moments—they, rash men,  
Had seen the anticipated quarry turned  
Into avengers, from whose wrath they fled  
In terror. Disappointment and dismay  
Remained for all whose fancies had run wild

With evil expectations ; confidence  
And perfect triumph for the better cause.

The State—as if to stamp the final seal  
On her security, and to the world  
Show what she was, a high and fearless soul,  
Exulting in defiance, or heart-stung  
By sharp resentment, or belike to taunt  
With spiteful gratitude the baffled League,  
That had stirred up her slackening faculties  
To a new transition—when the King was crushed,  
Spared not the empty throne, and in proud haste  
Assumed the body and venerable name  
Of a Republic. Lamentable crimes,  
'Tis true, had gone before this hour, dire work  
Of massacre, in which the senseless sword  
Was prayed to as a judge ; but these were past,  
Earth free from them for ever, as was thought,—  
Ephemeral monsters, to be seen but once !  
Things that could only show themselves and die.

Cheered with this hope, to Paris I returned,  
And ranged, with ardour heretofore unfelt,  
The spacious city, and in progress passed  
The prison where the unhappy Monarch lay,  
Associate with his children and his wife  
In bondage ; and the palace, lately stormed  
With roar of cannon by a furious host.  
I crossed the square (an empty area then !)  
Of the Carrousel, where so late had lain  
The dead, upon the dying heaped, and gazed  
On this and other spots, as doth a man  
Upon a volume whose contents he knows  
Are memorable, but from him locked up,  
Being written in a tongue he cannot read,  
So that he questions the mute leaves with pain,  
And half upbraids their silence. But that night  
I felt most deeply in what world I was,  
What ground I trod on, and what air I breathed.  
High was my room and lonely, near the roof  
Of a large mansion or hotel, a lodge  
That would have pleased me in more quiet times ;  
Nor was it wholly without pleasure then.  
With unextinguished taper I kept watch,  
Reading at intervals ; the fear gone by  
Pressed on me almost like a fear to come.

I thought of those September massacres,  
Divided from me by one little month,  
Saw them and touched: the rest was conjured up  
From tragic fictions or true history,  
Remembrances and dim admonishments.  
The horse is taught his manage, and no star  
Of wildest course but treads back his own steps;  
For the spent hurricane the air provides  
As fierce a successor; the tide retreats  
But to return out of its hiding-place  
In the great deep; all things have second birth:  
The earthquake is not satisfied at once;  
And in this way I wrought upon myself,  
Until I seemed to hear a voice that cried,  
To the whole city, "Sleep no more." The trance  
Fled with the voice to which it had given birth;  
But vainly comments of a calmer mind  
Promised soft peace and sweet forgetfulness.  
The place, all hushed and silent as it was,  
Appeared unfit for the repose of night,  
Defenceless as a wood where tigers roam.

With early morning towards the Palace-walk  
Of Orleans eagerly I turned: as yet  
The streets were still; not so those long Arcades;  
There, 'mid a peal of ill-matched sounds and cries,  
That greeted me on entering, I could hear  
Shrill voices from the hawkers in the throng,  
Bawling, "Denunciation of the Crimes  
Of Maximilian Robespierre;" the hand,  
Prompt as the voice, held forth a printed speech,  
The same that had been recently pronounced,  
When Robespierre, not ignorant for what mark  
Some words of indirect reproof had been  
Intended, rose in hardihood, and dared  
The man who had an ill surmise of him  
To bring his charge in openness; whereat,  
When a dead pause ensued, and no one stirred,  
In silence of all present, from his seat  
Louvet walked single through the avenue,  
And took his station in the Tribune, saying,  
"I, Robespierre, accuse thee!" Well is known  
The inglorious issue of that charge, and how  
He, who had launched the startling thunderbolt,  
The one bold man, whose voice the attack had sounded,

Was left without a follower to discharge  
His perilous duty, and retire lamenting  
That Heaven's best aid is wasted upon men  
Who to themselves are false.

But these are things  
Of which I speak, only as they were storm  
Or sunshine to my individual mind,  
No further. Let me then relate that now—  
In some sort seeing with my proper eyes  
That Liberty, and Life, and Death, would soon  
To the remotest corners of the land  
Lie in the arbitrement of those who ruled  
The capital City ; what was struggled for,  
And by what combatants victory must be won ;  
The indecision on their part whose aim  
Seemed best, and the straightforward path of those  
Who in attack or in defence were strong  
Through their impiety—my inmost soul  
Was agitated ; yea, I could almost  
Have prayed that throughout earth upon all men,  
By patient exercise of reason made  
Worthy of liberty, all spirits filled  
With zeal expanding in Truth's holy light,  
The gift of tongues might fall, and power arrive  
From the four quarters of the winds to do  
For France, what without help she could not do,  
A work of honour ; think not that to this  
I added, work of safety : from all doubt  
Or trepidation for the end of things  
Far was I, far as angels are from guilt.

Yet did I grieve, nor only grieved, but thought  
Of opposition and of remedies :  
An insignificant stranger and obscure,  
And one, moreover, little graced with power  
Of eloquence even in my native speech,  
And all unfit for tumult or intrigue,  
Yet would I at this time with willing heart  
Have undertaken for a cause so great  
Service however dangerous. I revolved,  
How much the destiny of Man had still  
Hung upon single persons ; that there was,  
Transcendent to all local patrimony,  
One nature, as there is one sun in heaven ;  
That objects, even as they are great, thereby

Do come within the reach of humblest eyes ;  
That Man is only weak through his mistrust  
And want of hope where evidence divine  
Proclaims to him that hope should be most sure ;  
Nor did the inexperience of my youth  
Preclude conviction, that a spirit strong  
In hope, and trained to noble aspirations,  
A spirit thoroughly faithful to itself,  
Is for Society's unreasoning herd  
A domineering instinct, serves at once  
For way and guide, a fluent receptacle  
That gathers up each petty straggling rill  
And vein of water, glad to be rolled on  
In safe obedience ; that a mind, whose rest  
Is where it ought to be, in self-restraint,  
In circumspection and simplicity,  
Falls rarely in entire discomfiture  
Below its aim, or meets with, from without,  
A treachery that foils it or defeats ;  
And, lastly, if the means on human will,  
Frail human will, dependent should betray  
Him who too boldly trusted them, I felt  
That 'mid the loud distractions of the world  
A sovereign voice subsists within the soul,  
Arbiter undisturbed of right and wrong,  
Of life and death, in majesty severe  
Enjoining, as may best promote the aims  
Of truth and justice, either sacrifice,  
From whatsoever region of our cares  
Or our infirm affections Nature pleads,  
Earnest and blind, against the stern decree.

On the other side, I called to mind those truths  
That are the commonplaces of the schools—  
(A theme for boys, too hackneyed for their sires,)   
Yet, with a revelation's liveliness,  
In all their comprehensive bearings known  
And visible to philosophers of old,  
Men who, to business of the world untrained,  
Lived in the shade ; and to Harmodius known  
And his compeer Aristogiton, known  
To Brutus—that tyrannic power is weak,  
Hath neither gratitude, nor faith, nor love,  
Nor the support of good or evil men  
To trust in ; that the godhead which is ours

Can never utterly be charmed or stilled ;  
That nothing hath a natural right to last  
But equity and reason ; that all else  
Meets foes irreconcilable, and at best  
Lives only by variety of disease.

Well might my wishes be intense, my thoughts  
Strong and perturbed, not doubting at that time  
But that the virtue of one paramount mind  
Would have abashed those impious crests—have quelled  
Outrage and bloody power, and—in despite  
Of what the People long had been and were  
Through ignorance and false teaching, sadder proof  
Of immaturity, and—in the teeth  
Of desperate opposition from without—  
Have cleared a passage for just government,  
And left a solid birthright to the State,  
Redeemed, according to example given  
By ancient lawgivers.

In this frame of mind,  
Dragged by a chain of harsh necessity,  
So seemed it,—now I thankfully acknowledge,  
Forced by the gracious providence of Heaven,—  
To England I returned, else (though assured  
That I both was and must be of small weight,  
No better than a landsman on the deck  
Of a ship struggling with a hideous storm)  
Doubtless, I should have then made common cause  
With some who perished ; haply perished too,  
A poor mistaken and bewildered offering,—  
Should to the breast of Nature have gone back,  
With all my resolutions, all my hopes,  
A Poet only to myself, to men  
Useless, and even, beloved Friend ! a soul  
To thee unknown !

Twice had the trees let fall  
Their leaves, as often Winter had put on  
His hoary crown, since I had seen the surge  
Beat against Albion's shore, since ear of mine  
Had caught the accents of my native speech  
Upon our native country's sacred ground.  
A patriot of the world, how could I glide  
Into communion with her sylvan shades,  
Erewhile my tuneful haunt ? It pleased me more  
To abide in the great City, where I found

The general air still busy with the stir  
Of that first memorable onset made  
By a strong levy of humanity  
Upon the traffickers in Negro blood ;  
Effort which, though defeated, had recalled  
To notice old forgotten principles,  
And through the nation spread a novel heat  
Of virtuous feeling. For myself, I own  
That this particular strife had wanted power  
To rivet my affections ; nor did now  
Its unsuccessful issue much excite  
My sorrow ; for I brought with me the faith  
That, if France prospered, good men would not long  
Pay fruitless worship to humanity,  
And this most rotten branch of human shame,  
Object, so seemed it, of superfluous pains  
Would fall together with its parent tree.  
What, then, were my emotions, when in arms  
Britain put forth her free-born strength in league,  
Oh, pity and shame ! with those confederate Powers !  
Not in my single self alone I found,  
But in the minds of all ingenuous youth,  
Change and subversion from that hour. No shock  
Given to my moral nature had I known  
Down to that very moment ; neither lapse  
Nor turn of sentiment that might be named  
A revolution, save at this one time ;  
All else was progress on the self-same path  
On which, with a diversity of pace,  
I had been travelling : this a stride at once  
Into another region. As a light  
And pliant harebell, swinging in the breeze  
On some grey rock—its birth-place—so had I  
Wantoned, fast rooted on the ancient tower  
Of my beloved country, wishing not  
A happier fortune than to wither there :  
Now was I from that pleasant station torn  
And tossed about in whirlwind. I rejoiced,  
Yea, afterwards—truth most painful to record !—  
Exulted, in the triumph of my soul,  
When Englishmen by thousands were o'erthrown,  
Left without glory on the field, or driven,  
Brave hearts ! to shameful flight. It was a grief,—  
Grief call it not, 'twas anything but that,—  
A conflict of sensations without name,

Of which *he* only, who may love the sight  
Of a village steeple, as I do, can judge,  
When, in the congregation bending all  
To their great Father, prayers were offered up,  
Or praises for our country's victories ;  
And, 'mid the simple worshippers, perchance  
I only, like an uninvited guest  
Whom no one owned, sate silent, shall I add,  
Fed on the day of vengeance yet to come.

Oh ! much have they to account for, who could tear,  
By violence, at one decisive rent,  
From the best youth in England their dear pride,  
Their joy, in England ; this, too, at a time  
In which worst losses easily might wean  
The best of names, when patriotic love  
Did of itself in modesty give way,  
Like the Precursor when the Deity  
Is come Whose harbinger he was ; a time  
In which apostasy from ancient faith  
Seemed but conversion to a higher creed ;  
Withal a season dangerous and wild,  
A time when sage Experience would have snatched  
Flowers out of any hedge-row to compose  
A chaplet in contempt of his grey locks.

When the proud fleet that bears the red-cross flag  
In that unworthy service was prepared  
To mingle, I beheld the vessels lie,  
A brood of gallant creatures, on the deep ;  
I saw them in their rest, a sojourner  
Through a whole month of calm and glassy days  
In that delightful island which protects  
Their place of convocation—there I heard,  
Each evening, pacing by the still sea-shore,  
A monitory sound that never failed,—  
The sunset cannon. While the orb went down  
In the tranquillity of nature, came  
That voice, ill requiem ! seldom heard by me  
Without a spirit overcast by dark  
Imaginations, sense of woes to come,  
Sorrow for human kind, and pain of heart.

In France, the men, who, for their desperate ends,  
Had plucked up mercy by the roots, were glad  
Of this new enemy. Tyrants, strong before

In wicked pleas, were strong as demons now ;  
And thus, on every side beset with foes,  
The goaded land waxed mad ; the crimes of few  
Spread into madness of the many ; blasts  
From hell came sanctified like airs from heaven.  
The sternness of the just, the faith of those  
Who doubted not that Providence had times  
Of vengeful retribution, theirs who throned  
The human Understanding paramount  
And made of that their God, the hopes of men  
Who were content to barter short-lived pangs  
For a paradise of ages, the blind rage  
Of insolent tempers, the light vanity  
Of intermeddlers, steady purposes  
Of the suspicious, slips of the indiscreet,  
And all the accidents of life—were pressed  
Into one service, busy with one work.  
The Senate stood aghast, her prudence quenched,  
Her wisdom stifled, and her justice scared,  
Her frenzy only active to extol  
Past outrages, and shape the way for new,  
Which no one dared to oppose or mitigate.

Domestic carnage now filled the whole year  
With feast-days ; old men from the chimney-nook,  
The maiden from the bosom of her love,  
The mother from the cradle of her babe,  
The warrior from the field—all perished, all—  
Friends, enemies, of all parties, ages, ranks,  
Head after head, and never heads enough  
For those that bade them fall. They found their joy,  
They made it proudly, eager as a child,  
(If like desires of innocent little ones  
May with such heinous appetites be compared),  
Pleased in some open field to exercise  
A toy that mimics with revolving wings  
The motion of a wind-mill ; though the air  
Do of itself blow fresh, and make the vanes  
Spin in his eyesight, *that* contents him not,  
But with the plaything at arm's length, he sets  
His front against the blast, and runs amain,  
That it may whirl the faster.

Amid the depth  
Of those enormities, even thinking minds  
Forgot, at seasons, whence they had their being—

Forgot that such a sound was ever heard  
As Liberty upon earth: yet all beneath  
Her innocent authority was wrought,  
Nor could have been, without her blessed name.  
The illustrious wife of Roland, in the hour  
Of her composure, felt that agony,  
And gave it vent in her last words. O Friend!  
It was a lamentable time for man,  
Whether a hope had e'er been his or not:  
A woful time for them whose hopes survived  
The shock; most woful for those few who still  
Were flattered, and had trust in human kind:  
They had the deepest feeling of the grief.  
Meanwhile the Invaders fared as they deserved:  
The Herculean Commonwealth had put forth her arms,  
And throttled with an infant godhead's might  
The snakes about her cradle; that was well,  
And as it should be; yet no cure for them  
Whose souls were sick with pain of what would be  
Hereafter brought in charge against mankind.  
Most melancholy at that time, O Friend!  
Were my day-thoughts,—my nights were miserable;  
Through months, through years, long after the last beat  
Of those atrocities, the hour of sleep  
To me came rarely charged with natural gifts,  
Such ghastly visions had I of despair  
And tyranny, and implements of death;  
And innocent victims sinking under fear,  
And momentary hope, and worn-out prayer,  
Each in his separate cell, or penned in crowds  
For sacrifice, and struggling with fond mirth  
And levity in dungeons, where the dust  
Was laid with tears. Then suddenly the scene  
Changed, and the unbroken dream entangled me  
In long orations, which I strove to plead  
Before unjust tribunals,—with a voice  
Labouring, a brain confounded, and a sense,  
Death-like, of treacherous desertion, felt  
In the last place of refuge—my own soul.

When I began in youth's delightful prime  
To yield myself to Nature, when that strong  
And holy passion overcame me first,  
Nor day nor night, evening or morn, was free  
From its oppression. But, O Power Supreme!

Without Whose call this world would cease to breathe,  
Who from the fountain of Thy grace dost fill  
The veins that branch through every frame of life,  
Making man what he is, creature divine,  
In single or in social eminence,  
Above the rest raised infinite ascents  
When reason that enables him to be  
Is not sequestered—what a change is here!  
How different ritual for this after-worship,  
What countenance to promote this second love!  
The first was service paid to things which lie  
Guarded within the bosom of Thy will.  
Therefore to serve was high beatitude;  
Tumult was therefore gladness, and the fear  
Ennobling, venerable; sleep secure,  
And waking thoughts more rich than happiest dreams.

But as the ancient Prophets, borne aloft  
In vision, yet constrained by natural laws  
With them to take a troubled human heart,  
Wanted not consolations, nor a creed  
Of reconciliation, then when they denounced,  
On towns and cities, wallowing in the abyss  
Of their offences, punishment to come;  
Or saw, like other men, with bodily eyes,  
Before them, in some desolated place,  
The wrath consummate and the threat fulfilled;  
So, with devout humility be it said,  
So, did a portion of that spirit fall  
On me uplifted from the vantage ground  
Of pity and sorrow to a state of being  
That through the time's exceeding fierceness saw  
Glimpses of retribution, terrible,  
And in the order of sublime behests:  
But, even if that were not, amid the awe  
Of unintelligible chastisement,  
Not only acquiescences of faith  
Survived, but daring sympathies with power,  
Motions not treacherous or profane, else why  
Within the folds of no ungentle breast  
Their dread vibration to this hour prolonged?  
Wild blasts of music thus could find their way  
Into the midst of turbulent events;  
So that worst tempests might be listened to.  
Then was the truth received into my heart,

That, under heaviest sorrow earth can bring,  
If from the affliction somewhere do not grow  
Honour which could not else have been, a faith,  
An elevation, and a sanctity,  
If new strength be not given nor old restored,  
The blame is ours, not Nature's. When a taunt  
Was taken up by scoffers in their pride,  
Saying, "Behold the harvest that we reap  
From popular government and equality,"  
I clearly saw that neither these nor aught  
Of wild belief engrafted on their names  
By false philosophy had caused the woe,  
But a terrific reservoir of guilt  
And ignorance filled up from age to age,  
That could no longer hold its loathsome charge,  
But burst and spread in deluge through the land.

And as the desert bath green spots, the sea  
Small islands scattered amid stormy waves,  
So *that* disastrous period did not want  
Bright sprinklings of all human excellence,  
To which the silver wands of saints in Heaven  
Might point with rapturous joy. Yet not the less,  
For those examples, in no age surpassed,  
Of fortitude and energy and love,  
And human nature faithful to herself  
Under worst trials, was I driven to think  
Of the glad times when first I traversed France  
A youthful pilgrim; above all reviewed  
That eventide, when under windows bright  
With happy faces and with garlands hung,  
And through a rainbow-arch that spanned the street,  
Triumphal pomp for liberty confirmed,  
I paced, a dear companion at my side,  
The town of Arras, whence with promise high  
Issued, on delegation to sustain  
Humanity and right, *that* Robespierre,  
He who thereafter, and in how short time!  
Wielded the sceptre of the Atheist crew.  
When the calamity spread far and wide—  
And this same city, that did then appear  
To outrun the rest in exultation, groaned  
Under the vengeance of her cruel son,  
As Lear reproached the winds—I could almost  
Have quarrelled with that blameless spectacle

For lingering yet an image in my mind  
To mock me under such a strange reverse.

O Friend! few happier moments have been mine  
Than that which told the downfall of this Tribe  
So dreaded, so abhorred. The day deserves  
A separate record. Over the smooth sands  
Of Leven's ample estuary lay  
My journey, and beneath a genial sun,  
With distant prospect among gleams of sky  
And clouds and intermingling mountain tops,  
In one inseparable glory clad,  
Creatures of one ethereal substance met  
In consistory, like a diadem  
Or crown of burning seraphs as they sit  
In the empyrean. Underneath that pomp  
Celestial, lay unseen the pastoral vales  
Among whose happy fields I had grown up  
From childhood. On the fulgent spectacle,  
That neither passed away nor changed, I gazed  
Enrapt; but brightest things are wont to draw  
Sad opposites out of the inner heart,  
As even their pensive influence drew from mine.  
How could it otherwise? for not in vain  
That very morning had I turned aside  
To seek the ground where, 'mid a throng of graves,  
An honoured teacher of my youth was laid,  
And on the stone were graven by his desire  
Lines from the churchyard elegy of Gray.  
This faithful guide, speaking from his death-bed,  
Added no farewell to his parting counsel,  
But said to me, "My head will soon lie low;"  
And when I saw the turf that covered him,  
After the lapse of full eight years, those words,  
With sound of voice and countenance of the Man,  
Came back upon me, so that some few tears  
Fell from me in my own despite. But now  
I thought, still traversing that widespread plain,  
With tender pleasure of the verses graven  
Upon his tombstone, whispering to myself:  
He loved the Poets, and, if now alive,  
Would have loved me, as one not destitute  
Of promise, nor belying the kind hope  
That he had formed, when I, at his command,  
Began to spin, with toil, my earliest songs.

As I advanced, all that I saw or felt  
Was gentleness and peace. Upon a small  
And rocky island near, a fragment stood,  
(Itself like a sea rock) the low remains  
(With shells encrusted, dark with briny weeds)  
Of a dilapidated structure, once  
A Romish chapel, where the vested priest  
Said matins at the hour that suited those  
Who crossed the sands with ebb of morning tide.  
Not far from that still ruin all the plain  
Lay spotted with a variegated crowd  
Of vehicles and travellers, horse and foot,  
Wading beneath the conduct of their guide  
In loose procession through the shallow stream  
Of inland waters; the great sea meanwhile  
Heaved at safe distance, far retired. I paused,  
Longing for skill to paint a scene so bright  
And cheerful, but the foremost of the band  
As he approached, no salutation given  
In the familiar language of the day,  
Cried, "Robespierre is dead!" nor was a doubt,  
After strict question, left within my mind  
That he and his supporters all were fallen.

Great was my transport, deep my gratitude  
To everlasting Justice, by this fiat  
Made manifest. "Come now, ye golden times,"  
Said I forth-pouring on those open sands  
A hymn of triumph: "as the morning comes  
From out the bosom of the night, come ye:  
Thus far our trust is verified; behold!  
They who with clumsy desperation brought  
A river of Blood, and preached that nothing else  
Could cleanse the Augean stable, by the might  
Of their own helper have been swept away;  
Their madness stands declared and visible;  
Elsewhere will safety now be sought, and earth  
March firmly towards righteousness and peace."—  
Then schemes I framed more calmly, when and how  
The madding factions might be tranquillised,  
And how through hardships manifold and long  
The glorious renovation would proceed.  
Thus interrupted by uneasy bursts  
Of exultation, I pursued my way  
Along that very shore which I had skimmed

In former days, when—spurring from the Vale  
Of Nightshade, and St. Mary's mouldering fane,  
And the stone abbot, after circuit made  
In wantonness of heart, a joyous band  
Of schoolboys hastening to their distant home  
Along the margin of the moonlight sea—  
We beat with thundering hoofs the level sand.

## BOOK ELEVENTH

FRANCE (*concluded*)

FROM that time forth, Authority in France  
Put on a milder face; Terror had ceased,  
Yet everything was wanting that might give  
Courage to them who looked for good by light  
Of rational Experience, for the shoots  
And hopeful blossoms of a second spring:  
Yet, in me, confidence was unimpaired;  
The Senate's language, and the public acts  
And measures of the Government, though both  
Weak, and of heartless omen, had not power  
To daunt me; in the People was my trust:  
And, in the virtues which mine eyes had seen,  
I knew that wound external could not take  
Life from the young Republic; that new foes  
Would only follow, in the path of shame,  
Their brethren, and her triumphs be in the end  
Great, universal, irresistible.  
This intuition led me to confound  
One victory with another, higher far,—  
Triumphs of unambitious peace at home,  
And noiseless fortitude. Beholding still  
Resistance strong as heretofore, I thought  
That what was in degree the same was likewise  
The same in quality,—that, as the worse  
Of the two spirits then at strife remained  
Untired, the better, surely, would preserve  
The heart that first had roused him. Youth maintains,  
In all conditions of society,  
Communion more direct and intimate  
With Nature,—hence, oftentimes, with reason too—  
Than age or manhood, even. To Nature, then,  
Power had reverted: habit, custom, law,  
Had left an interregnum's open space  
For *her* to move about in, uncontrolled.

Hence could I see how Babel-like their task,  
 Who, by the recent deluge stupified,  
 With their whole souls went culling from the day  
 Its petty promises, to build a tower  
 For their own safety ; laughed with my compeers  
 At gravest heads, by enmity to France  
 Distempered, till they found, in every blast  
 Forced from the street-disturbing news-man's horn,  
 For her great cause record or prophecy  
 Of utter ruin. How might we believe  
 That wisdom could, in any shape, come near  
 Men clinging to delusions so insane ?  
 And thus, experience proving that no few  
 Of our opinions had been just, we took  
 Like credit to ourselves where less was due,  
 And thought that other notions were as sound,  
 Yea, could not but be right, because we saw  
 That foolish men opposed them.

To a strain

More animated I might here give way,  
 And tell, since juvenile errors are my theme,  
 What in those days, through Britain, was performed  
 To turn *all* judgments out of their right course ;  
 But this is passion over-near ourselves,  
 Reality too close and too intense,  
 And intermixed with something, in my mind,  
 Of scorn and condemnation personal,  
 That would profane the sanctity of verse.  
 Our Shepherds, this say merely, at that time  
 Acted, or seemed at least to act, like men  
 Thirsting to make the guardian crook of law  
 A tool of murder ; they who ruled the State—  
 Though with such awful proof before their eyes  
 That he, who would sow death, reaps death, or worse,  
 And can reap nothing better—child-like longed  
 To imitate, not wise enough to avoid ;  
 Or left (by mere timidity betrayed)  
 The plain straight road, for one no better chosen  
 Than if their wish had been to undermine  
 Justice, and make an end of Liberty.

But from these bitter truths I must return  
 To my own history. It hath been told  
 That I was led to take an eager part  
 In arguments of civil polity,

Abruptly, and indeed before my time :  
I had approached, like other youths, the shield  
Of human nature from the golden side,  
And would have fought, even to the death, to attest  
The quality of the metal which I saw.  
What there is best in individual man,  
Of wise in passion, and sublime in power,  
Benevolent in small societies,  
And great in large ones, I had oft revolved,  
Felt deeply, but not thoroughly understood  
By reason : nay, far from it ; they were yet,  
As cause was given me afterwards to learn,  
Not proof against the injuries of the day ;  
Lodged only at the sanctuary's door,  
Not safe within its bosom. Thus prepared,  
And with such general insight into evil,  
And of the bounds which sever it from good,  
As books and common intercourse with life  
Must needs have given—to the inexperienced mind,  
When the world travels in a beaten road,  
Guide faithful as is needed—I began  
To meditate with ardour on the rule  
And management of nations ; what it is  
And ought to be ; and strove to learn how far  
Their power or weakness, wealth or poverty,  
Their happiness or misery, depends  
Upon their laws, and fashion of the State.

O pleasant exercise of hope and joy !  
For mighty were the auxiliars which then stood  
Upon our side, us who were strong in love !  
Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,  
But to be young was very Heaven ! O times,  
In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways  
Of custom, law, and statute, took at once  
The attraction of a country in romance !  
When Reason seemed the most to assert her rights  
When most intent on making of herself  
A prime enchantress—to assist the work,  
Which then was going forward in her name !  
Not favoured spots alone, but the whole Earth,  
The beauty wore of promise—that which sets  
(As at some moments might not be unfelt  
Among the bowers of Paradise itself)  
The budding rose above the rose full blown.

What temper at the prospect did not wake  
To happiness unthought of? The inert  
Were roused, and lively natures rapt away!  
They who had fed their childhood upon dreams,  
The play-fellows of fancy, who had made  
All powers of swiftness, subtilty, and strength  
Their ministers,—who in lordly wise had stirred  
Among the grandest objects of the sense,  
And dealt with whatsoever they found there  
As if they had within some lurking right  
To wield it;—they, too, who of gentle mood  
Had watched all gentle motions, and to these  
Had fitted their own thoughts, schemers more mild,  
And in the region of their peaceful selves;—  
Now was it that *both* found, the meek and lofty  
Did both find, helpers to their hearts' desire,  
And stuff at hand, plastic as they could wish,—  
Were called upon to exercise their skill,  
Not in Utopia,—subterranean fields,—  
Or some secreted island, Heaven knows where!  
But in the very world, which is the world  
Of all of us,—the place where, in the end,  
We find our happiness, or not at all!

Why should I not confess that Earth was then  
To me, what an inheritance, new-fallen,  
Seems, when the first time visited, to one  
Who thither comes to find in it his home?  
He walks about and looks upon the spot  
With cordial transport, moulds it and remoulds,  
And is half-pleased with things that are amiss,  
'Twill be such joy to see them disappear.

An active partisan, I thus convoked  
From every object pleasant circumstance  
To suit my ends; I moved among mankind  
With genial feelings still predominant;  
When erring, erring on the better part,  
And in the kinder spirit; placable,  
Indulgent, as not uninformed that men  
See as they have been taught—Antiquity  
Gives rights to error; and aware, no less  
That throwing off oppression must be work  
As well of License as of Liberty;  
And above all—for this was more than all—  
Not caring if the wind did now and then

Blow keen upon an eminence that gave  
Prospect so large into futurity ;  
In brief, a child of Nature, as at first,  
Diffusing only those affections wider  
That from the cradle had grown up with me,  
And losing, in no other way than light  
Is lost in light, the weak in the more strong.

In the main outline, such it might be said  
Was my condition, till with open war  
Britain opposed the liberties of France.  
This threw me first out of the pale of love ;  
Soured and corrupted, upwards to the source,  
My sentiments ; was not, as hitherto,  
A swallowing up of lesser things in great,  
But change of them into their contraries ;  
And thus a way was opened for mistakes  
And false conclusions, in degree as gross,  
In kind more dangerous. What had been a pride,  
Was now a shame ; my likings and my loves  
Ran in new channels, leaving old ones dry ;  
And hence a blow that, in maturer age,  
Would but have touched the judgment, struck more deep  
Into sensations near the heart : meantime,  
As from the first, wild theories were afloat,  
To whose pretensions, sedulously urged,  
I had but lent a careless ear, assured  
That time was ready to set all things right,  
And that the multitude, so long oppressed,  
Would be oppressed no more.

But when events  
Brought less encouragement, and unto these  
The immediate proof of principles no more  
Could be entrusted, while the events themselves,  
Worn out in greatness, stripped of novelty,  
Less occupied the mind, and sentiments  
Could through my understanding's natural growth  
No longer keep their ground, by faith maintained  
Of inward consciousness, and hope that laid  
Her hand upon her object—evidence  
Safer, of universal application, such  
As could not be impeached, was sought elsewhere.

But now, become oppressors in their turn,  
Frenchmen had changed a war of self-defence  
For one of conquest, losing sight of all

What temper at the prospect did not wake  
To happiness unthought of? The inert  
Were roused, and lively natures rapt away!  
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Frenchmen had changed a war of self-defence  
For one of conquest, losing sight of all

Which they had struggled for: up mounted now,  
 Openly in the eye of earth and heaven,  
 The scale of liberty. I read her doom,  
 With anger vexed, with disappointment sore,  
 But not dismayed, nor taking to the shame  
 Of a false prophet. While resentment rose  
 Striving to hide, what nought could heal, the wounds  
 Of mortified presumption, I adhered  
 More firmly to old tenets, and, to prove  
 Their temper, strained them more; and thus, in heat  
 Of contest, did opinions every day  
 Grow into consequence, till round my mind  
 They clung, as if they were its life, nay more,  
 The very being of the immortal soul.

This was the time, when, all things tending fast  
 To depravation, speculative schemes—  
 That promised to abstract the hopes of Man  
 Out of his feelings, to be fixed thenceforth  
 For ever in a purer element—  
 Found ready welcome. Tempting region *that*  
 For Zeal to enter and refresh herself,  
 Where passions had the privilege to work,  
 And never hear the sound of their own names.  
 But, speaking more in charity, the dream  
 Flattered the young, pleased with extremes, nor least  
 With that which makes our Reason's naked self  
 The object of its fervour. What delight!  
 How glorious! in self-knowledge and self-rule,  
 To look through all the frailties of the world,  
 And, with a resolute mastery shaking off  
 Infirmities of nature, time, and place,  
 Build social upon personal Liberty,  
 Which, to the blind restraints of general laws,  
 Superior, magisterially adopts  
 One guide, the light of circumstances, flashed  
 Upon an independent intellect.  
 Thus expectation rose again; thus hope,  
 From her first ground expelled, grew proud once more.  
 Oft, as my thoughts were turned to human kind,  
 I scorned indifference; but, inflamed with thirst  
 Of a secure intelligence, and sick  
 Of other longing, I pursued what seemed  
 A more exalted nature; wished that Man  
 Should start out of his earthly, worm-like state,

And spread abroad the wings of Liberty,  
Lord of himself, in undisturbed delight—  
A noble aspiration ! yet I feel  
(Sustained by worthier as by wiser thoughts)  
The aspiration, nor shall ever cease  
To feel it ;—but return we to our course.

Enough, 'tis true—could such a plea excuse  
Those aberrations—had the clamorous friends  
Of ancient Institutions said and done  
To bring disgrace upon their very names ;  
Disgrace, of which, custom and written law,  
And sundry moral sentiments as props  
Or emanations of those institutes,  
Too justly bore a part. A veil had been  
Uplifted ; why deceive ourselves ? in sooth,  
'Twas even so ; and sorrow for the man  
Who either had not eyes wherewith to see,  
Or, seeing, had forgotten ! A strong shock  
Was given to old opinions ; all men's minds  
Had felt its power, and mine was both let loose,  
Let loose and goaded. After what hath been  
Already said of patriotic love,  
Suffice it here to add, that, somewhat stern  
In temperament, withal a happy man,  
And therefore bold to look on painful things,  
Free likewise of the world, and thence more bold,  
I summoned my best skill, and toiled, intent  
To anatomise the frame of social life ;  
Yea, the whole body of society  
Searched to its heart. Share with me, Friend ! the wish  
That some dramatic tale, endued with shapes  
Livelier, and flinging out less guarded words  
Than suit the work we fashion, might set forth  
What then I learned, or think I learned, of truth,  
And the errors into which I fell, betrayed  
By present objects, and by reasonings false  
From their beginnings, inasmuch as drawn  
Out of a heart that had been turned aside  
From Nature's way by outward accidents,  
And which was thus confounded, more and more  
Misguided, and misguiding. So I fared,  
Dragging all precepts, judgments, maxims, creeds,  
Like culprits to the bar ; calling the mind,  
Suspiciously, to establish in plain day

Her titles and her honours ; now believing,  
 Now disbelieving ; endlessly perplexed  
 With impulse, motive, right and wrong, the ground  
 Of obligation, what the rule and whence  
 The sanction ; till, demanding formal *proof*,  
 And seeking it in every thing, I lost  
 All feeling of conviction, and, in fine,  
 Sick, wearied out with contrarieties,  
 Yielded up moral questions in despair.

This was the crisis of that strong disease,  
 This the soul's last and lowest ebb ; I drooped,  
 Deeming our blessed reason of least use  
 Where wanted most : "The lordly attributes  
 Of will and choice," I bitterly exclaimed,  
 "What are they but a mockery of a Being  
 Who hath in no concerns of his a test  
 Of good and evil ; knows not what to fear  
 Or hope for, what to covet or to shun ;  
 And who, if those could be discerned, would yet  
 Be little profited, would see, and ask  
 Where is the obligation to enforce ?  
 And, to acknowledged law rebellious, still,  
 As selfish passion urged, would act amiss ;  
 The dupe of folly, or the slave of crime."

Depressed, bewildered thus, I did not walk  
 With scoffers, seeking light and gay revenge  
 From indiscriminate laughter, nor sate down  
 In reconciliation with an utter waste  
 Of intellect ; such sloth I could not brook,  
 (Too well I loved, in that my spring of life,  
 Pains-taking thoughts, and truth, their dear reward)  
 But turned to abstract science, and there sought  
 Work for the reasoning faculty enthroned  
 Where the disturbances of space and time—  
 Whether in matters various, properties  
 Inherent, or from human will and power  
 Derived—find no admission. Then it was—  
 Thanks to the bounteous Giver of all good—  
 That the beloved Sister in whose sight  
 Those days were passed, now speaking in a voice  
 Of sudden admonition—like a brook  
 That did but *cross* a lonely road, and now  
 Is seen, heard, felt, and caught at every turn,  
 Companion never lost through many a league—

Maintained for me a saving intercourse  
With my true self ; for, though bedimmed and changed  
Much, as it seemed, I was no further changed  
Than as a clouded and a waning moon :  
She whispered still that brightness would return ;  
She, in the midst of all, preserved me still  
A Poet, made me seek beneath that name,  
And that alone, my office upon earth ;  
And, lastly, as hereafter will be shown,  
If willing audience fail not, Nature's self,  
By all varieties of human love  
Assisted, led me back through opening day  
To those sweet counsels between head and heart  
Whence grew that genuine knowledge, fraught with peace,  
Which, through the later sinkings of this cause,  
Hath still upheld me, and upholds me now  
In the catastrophe (for so they dream,  
And nothing less), when, finally to close  
And seal up all the gains of France, a Pope  
Is summoned in, to crown an Emperor—  
This last opprobrium, when we see a people,  
That once looked up in faith, as if to Heaven  
For manna, take a lesson from the dog  
Returning to his vomit ; when the sun  
That rose in splendour, was alive, and moved  
In exultation with a living pomp  
Of clouds—his glory's natural retinue—  
Hath dropped all functions by the gods bestowed,  
And, turned into a gewgaw, a machine,  
Sets like an Opera phantom.

Thus, O Friend !  
Through times of honour and through times of shame  
Descending, have I faithfully retraced  
The perturbations of a youthful mind  
Under a long-lived storm of great events—  
A story destined for thy ear, who now,  
Among the fallen of nations, dost abide  
Where Etna, over hill and valley, casts  
His shadow stretching towards Syracuse,  
The city of Timoleon ! Righteous Heaven !  
How are the mighty prostrated ! They first,  
They first of all that breathe should have awaked  
When the great voice was heard from out the tombs  
Of ancient heroes. If I suffered grief  
For ill-requited France, by many deemed

A trifer only in her proudest day ;  
Have been distressed to think of what she once  
Promised, now is ; a far more sober cause  
Thine eyes must see of sorrow in a land,  
To the reanimating influence lost  
Of memory, to virtue lost and hope,  
Though with the wreck of loftier years bestrewn.

But indignation works where hope is not,  
And thou, O Friend ! wilt be refreshed. There is  
One great society alone on earth :  
The noble Living and the noble Dead.

Thine be such converse strong and sanative,  
A ladder for thy spirit to reascend  
To health and joy and pure contentedness ;  
To me the grief confined, that thou art gone  
From this last spot of earth, where Freedom now  
Stands single in her only sanctuary ;  
A lonely wanderer, art gone, by pain  
Compelled and sickness, at this latter day,  
This sorrowful reverse for all mankind.  
I feel for thee, must utter what I feel ;  
The sympathies erewhile in part discharged,  
Gather afresh, and will have vent again :  
My own delights do scarcely seem to me  
My own delights ; the lordly Alps themselves,  
Those rosy peaks, from which the Morning looks  
Abroad on many nations, are no more  
For me that image of pure gladness  
Which they were wont to be. Through kindred scenes,  
For purpose, at a time, how different !  
Thou tak'st thy way, carrying the heart and soul  
That Nature gives to Poets, now by thought  
Matured, and in the summer of their strength.  
Oh ! wrap him in your shades, ye giant woods,  
On Etna's side ; and thou, O flowery field  
Of Enna ! is there not some nook of thine,  
From the first play-time of the infant world  
Kept sacred to restorative delight,  
When from afar invoked by anxious love ?

Child of the mountains, among shepherds reared,  
Ere yet familiar with the classic page,  
I learnt to dream of Sicily ; and lo,  
The gloom, that, but a moment past, was deepened

At thy command, at her command gives way ;  
 A pleasant promise, wafted from her shores,  
 Comes o'er my heart : in fancy I behold  
 Her seas yet smiling, her once happy vales ;  
 Nor can my tongue give utterance to a name  
 Of note belonging to that honoured isle,  
 Philosopher or Bard, Empedocles,  
 Or Archimedes, pure abstracted soul !  
 That doth not yield a solace to my grief :  
 And, O Theocritus,<sup>1</sup> so far have some  
 Prevailed among the powers of heaven and earth,  
 By their endowments, good or great, that they  
 Have had, as thou reportest, miracles  
 Wrought for them in old time : yea, not unmoved,  
 When thinking on my own beloved friend,  
 I hear thee tell how bees with honey fed  
 Divine Comates, by his impious lord  
 Within a chest imprisoned ; how they came  
 Laden from blooming grove or flowery field,  
 And fed him there, alive, month after month,  
 Because the goatherd, blessed man ! had lips  
 Wet with the Muses' nectar.

Thus I soothe  
 The pensive moments by this calm fire-side,  
 And find a thousand bounteous images  
 To cheer the thoughts of those I love, and mine.  
 Our prayers have been accepted ; thou wilt stand  
 On Etna's summit, above earth and sea,  
 Triumphant, winning from the invaded heavens  
 Thoughts without bound, magnificent designs,  
 Worthy of poets who attuned their harps  
 In wood or echoing cave, for discipline  
 Of heroes ; or, in reverence to the gods,  
 'Mid temples, served by sapient priests, and choirs  
 Of virgins crowned with roses. Not in vain  
 Those temples, where they in their ruins yet  
 Survive for inspiration, shall attract  
 Thy solitary steps : and on the brink  
 Thou wilt recline of pastoral Arethuse ;  
 Or, if that fountain be in truth no more,  
 Then, near some other spring—which, by the name  
 Thou gratest, willingly deceived—  
 I see thee linger a glad votary,  
 And not a captive pining for his home.

<sup>1</sup> *Theocrit, Idyll, vii. 78.*

## BOOK TWELFTH

## IMAGINATION AND TASTE, HOW IMPAIRED AND RESTORED

LONG time have human ignorance and guilt  
Detained us, on what spectacles of woe  
Compelled to look, and inwardly oppressed  
With sorrow, disappointment, vexing thoughts,  
Confusion of the judgment, zeal decayed,  
And, lastly, utter loss of hope itself  
And things to hope for! Not with these began  
Our song, and not with these our song must end.  
Ye motions of delight, that haunt the sides  
Of the green hills; ye breezes and soft airs,  
Whose subtle intercourse with breathing flowers,  
Feelingly watched, might teach Man's haughty race  
How without injury to take, to give  
Without offence; ye who, as if to show  
The wondrous influence of power gently used,  
Bend the complying heads of lordly pines,  
And, with a touch, shift the stupendous clouds  
Through the whole compass of the sky; ye brooks,  
Muttering along the stones, a busy noise  
By day, a quiet sound in silent night;  
Ye waves, that out of the great deep steal forth  
In a calm hour to kiss the pebbly shore,  
Not mute, and then retire, fearing no storm;  
And you, ye groves, whose ministry it is  
To interpose the covert of your shades,  
Even as a sleep, between the heart of man  
And outward troubles, between man himself,  
Not seldom, and his own uneasy heart:  
Oh! that I had a music and a voice  
Harmonious as your own, that I might tell  
What ye have done for me. The morning shines,  
Nor heedeth Man's perverseness; Spring returns,—  
I saw the Spring return, and could rejoice,  
In common with the children of her love,  
Piping on boughs, or sporting on fresh fields,  
Or boldly seeking pleasure nearer heaven  
On wings that navigate cerulean skies.  
So neither were complacency, nor peace,  
Nor tender yearnings, wanting for my good  
Through these distracted times; in Nature still  
Glorying, I found a counterpoise in her,

Which, when the spirit of evil reached its height,  
Maintained for me a secret happiness.

This narrative, my Friend ! hath chiefly told  
Of intellectual power, fostering love,  
Dispensing truth, and, over men and things,  
Where reason yet might hesitate, diffusing  
Prophetic sympathies of genial faith :  
So was I favoured—such my happy lot—  
Until that natural graciousness of mind  
Gave way to overpressure from the times  
And their disastrous issues. What availed,  
When spells forbade the voyager to land,  
That fragrant notice of a pleasant shore  
Wafted, at intervals, from many a bower  
Of blissful gratitude and fearless love ?  
Dare I avow that wish was mine to see,  
And hope that future times *would* surely see,  
The man to come, parted, as by a gulph,  
From him who had been ; that I could no more  
Trust the elevation which had made me one  
With the great family that still survives  
To illuminate the abyss of ages past,  
Sage, warrior, patriot, hero ; for it seemed  
That their best virtues were not free from taint  
Of something false and weak, that could not stand  
The open eye of Reason. Then I said,  
“Go to the Poets, they will speak to thee  
More perfectly of purer creatures ;—yet  
If reason be nobility in man,  
Can aught be more ignoble than the man  
Whom they delight in, blinded as he is  
By prejudice, the miserable slave  
Of low ambition or distempered love ?”

In such strange passion, if I may once more  
Review the past, I warred against myself—  
A bigot to a new idolatry—  
Like a cowed monk who hath forsworn the world,  
Zealously laboured to cut off my heart  
From all the sources of her former strength ;  
And as, by simple waving of a wand,  
The wizard instantaneously dissolves  
Palace or grove, even so could I unsoul  
As readily by syllogistic words  
Those mysteries of being which have made,

And shall continue evermore to make,  
Of the whole human race one brotherhood.

What wonder, then, if, to a mind so far  
Perverted, even the visible Universe  
Fell under the dominion of a taste  
Less spiritual, with microscopic view  
Was scanned, as I had scanned the moral world?

O Soul of Nature! excellent and fair!  
That didst rejoice with me, with whom I, too,  
Rejoiced through early youth, before the winds  
And roaring waters, and in lights and shades  
That marched and countermarched about the hills  
In glorious apparition, Powers on whom  
I daily waited, now all eye and now  
All ear; but never long without the heart  
Employed, and man's unfolding intellect:  
O Soul of Nature! that, by laws divine  
Sustained and governed, still dost overflow  
With an impassioned life, what feeble ones  
Walk on this earth! how feeble have I been  
When thou wert in thy strength! Nor this through stroke  
Of human suffering, such as justifies  
Remissness and inaptitude of mind,  
But through presumption; even in pleasure pleased  
Unworthily, disliking here, and there  
Liking; by rules of mimic art transferred  
To things above all art; but more,—for this,  
Although a strong infection of the age,  
Was never much my habit—giving way  
To a comparison of scene with scene,  
Bent overmuch on superficial things,  
Pampering myself with meagre novelties  
Of colour and proportion; to the moods  
Of time and season, to the moral power,  
The affections and the spirit of the place,  
Insensible. Nor only did the love  
Of sitting thus in judgment interrupt  
My deeper feelings, but another cause,  
More subtle and less easily explained,  
That almost seems inherent in the creature,  
A twofold frame of body and of mind.  
I speak in recollection of a time  
When the bodily eye, in every stage of life

The most despotic of our senses, gained  
Such strength in *me* as often held my mind  
In absolute dominion. Gladly here,  
Entering upon abstruser argument,  
Could I endeavour to unfold the means  
Which Nature studiously employs to thwart  
This tyranny, summons all the senses each  
To counteract the other, and themselves,  
And makes them all, and the objects with which all  
Are conversant, subservient in their turn  
To the great ends of Liberty and Power.  
But leave we this : enough that my delights  
(Such as they were) were sought insatiably.  
Vivid the transport, vivid though not profound ;  
I roamed from hill to hill, from rock to rock,  
Still craving combinations of new forms,  
New pleasure, wider empire for the sight,  
Proud of her own endowments, and rejoiced  
To lay the inner faculties asleep.  
Amid the turns and counterturns, the strife  
And various trials of our complex being,  
As we grow up, such thralldom of that sense  
Seems hard to shun. And yet I knew a maid,  
A young enthusiast, who escaped these bonds ;  
Her eye was not the mistress of her heart ;  
Far less did rules prescribed by passive taste,  
Or barren intermeddling subtleties,  
Perplex her mind ; but, wise as women are  
When genial circumstance hath favoured them,  
She welcomed what was given, and craved no more ;  
Whate'er the scene presented to her view  
That was the best, to that she was attuned  
By her benign simplicity of life,  
And through a perfect happiness of soul,  
Whose variegated feelings were in this  
Sisters, that they were each some new delight.  
Birds in the bower, and lambs in the green field,  
Could they have known her, would have loved ; methough  
Her very presence such a sweetness breathed,  
That flowers, and trees, and even the silent hills,  
And everything she looked on, should have had  
An intimation how she bore herself  
Towards them and to all creatures. God delights  
In such a being ; for, her common thoughts  
Are piety, her life is gratitude.

Even like this maid, before I was called forth  
 From the retirement of my native hills,  
 I loved whate'er I saw : nor lightly loved,  
 But most intensely ; never dreamt of aught  
 More grand, more fair, more exquisitely framed  
 Than those few nooks to which my happy feet  
 Were limited. I had not at that time  
 Lived long enough, nor in the least survived  
 The first diviner influence of this world,  
 As it appears to unaccustomed eyes.  
 Worshipping them among the depth of things,  
 As piety ordained, could I submit  
 To measured admiration, or to aught  
 That should preclude humility and love ?  
 I felt, observed, and pondered ; did not judge,  
 Yea, never thought of judging ; with the gift  
 Of all this glory filled and satisfied.  
 And afterwards, when through the gorgeous Alps  
 Roaming, I carried with me the same heart :  
 In truth, the degradation—howsoe'er  
 Induced, effect, in whatsoe'er degree,  
 Of custom that prepares a partial scale  
 In which the little oft outweighs the great ;  
 Or any other cause that hath been named ;  
 Or lastly, aggravated by the times  
 And their impassioned sounds, which well might make  
 The milder minstrelsies of rural scenes  
 Inaudible—was transient ; I had known  
 Too forcibly, too early in my life,  
 Visitings of imaginative power  
 For this to last : I shook the habit off  
 Entirely and for ever, and again  
 In Nature's presence stood, as now I stand,  
 A sensitive being, a *creative* soul.

There are in our existence spots of time,  
 That with distinct pre-eminence retain  
 A renovating virtue, whence—depressed  
 By false opinion and contentious thought,  
 Or aught of heavier or more deadly weight,  
 In trivial occupations, and the round  
 Of ordinary intercourse—our minds  
 Are nourished and invisibly repaired ;  
 A virtue, by which pleasure is enhanced,  
 That penetrates, enables us to mount,

When high, more high, and lifts us up when fallen.  
This efficacious spirit chiefly lurks  
Among those passages of life that give  
Profoundest knowledge to what point, and how,  
The mind is lord and master—outward sense  
The obedient servant of her will. Such moments  
Are scattered everywhere, taking their date  
From our first childhood. I remember well,  
That once, while yet my inexperienced hand  
Could scarcely hold a bridle, with proud hopes  
I mounted, and we journeyed towards the hills:  
An ancient servant of my father's house  
Was with me, my encourager and guide:  
We had not travelled long, ere some mischance  
Disjoined me from my comrade; and, through fear  
Dismounting, down the rough and stony moor  
I led my horse, and, stumbling on, at length  
Came to a bottom, where in former times  
A murderer had been hung in iron chains.  
The gibbet-mast had mouldered down, the bones  
And iron case were gone; but on the turf,  
Hard by, soon after that fell deed was wrought,  
Some unknown hand had carved the murderer's name.  
The monumental letters were inscribed  
In times long past; but still, from year to year  
By superstition of the neighbourhood,  
The grass is cleared away, and to this hour  
The characters are fresh and visible:  
A casual glance had shown them, and I fled,  
Faltering and faint, and ignorant of the road:  
Then, reascending the bare common, saw  
A naked pool that lay beneath the hills,  
The beacon on the summit, and, more near,  
A girl, who bore a pitcher on her head,  
And seemed with difficult steps to force her way  
Against the blowing wind. It was, in truth,  
An ordinary sight; but I should need  
Colours and words that are unknown to man,  
To paint the visionary dreariness  
Which, while I looked all round for my lost guide,  
Invested moorland waste and naked pool,  
The beacon crowning the lone eminence,  
The female and her garments vexed and tossed  
By the strong wind. When, in the blessed hours  
Of early love, the loved one at my side,

I roamed, in daily presence of this scene,  
 Upon the naked pool and dreary crags,  
 And on the melancholy beacon, fell  
 A spirit of pleasure and youth's golden gleam ;  
 And think ye not with radiance more sublime  
 For these remembrances, and for the power  
 They had left behind? So feeling comes in aid  
 Of feeling, and diversity of strength  
 Attends us, if but once we have been strong.  
 Oh ! mystery of man, from what a depth  
 Proceed thy honours. I am lost, but see  
 In simple childhood something of the base  
 On which thy greatness stands ; but this I feel,  
 That from thyself it comes, that thou must give,  
 Else never canst receive. The days gone by  
 Return upon me almost from the dawn  
 Of life : the hiding-places of man's power  
 Open ; I would approach them, but they close.  
 I see by glimpses now ; when age comes on,  
 May scarcely see at all ; and I would give,  
 While yet we may, as far as words can give,  
 Substance and life to what I feel, enshrining,  
 Such is my hope, the spirit of the Past  
 For future restoration.—Yet another  
 Of these memorials :—

One Christmas-time,  
 On the glad eve of its dear holidays,  
 Feverish, and tired, and restless, I went forth  
 Into the fields, impatient for the sight  
 Of those led palfreys that should bear us home ;  
 My brothers and myself. There rose a crag,  
 That, from the meeting-point of two highways  
 Ascending, overlooked them both, far stretched ;  
 Thither, uncertain on which road to fix  
 My expectation, thither I repaired,  
 Scout-like, and gained the summit ; 'twas a day  
 Tempestuous, dark, and wild, and on the grass  
 I sate half-sheltered by a naked wall ;  
 Upon my right hand couched a single sheep,  
 Upon my left a blasted hawthorn stood ;  
 With those companions at my side, I watched,  
 Straining my eyes intensely, as the mist  
 Gave intermitting prospect of the copse  
 And plain beneath. Ere we to school returned,—  
 That dreary time,—ere we had been ten days

Sojourners in my father's house, he died ;  
And I and my three brothers, orphans then,  
Followed his body to the grave. The event,  
With all the sorrow that it brought, appeared  
A chastisement ; and when I called to mind  
That day so lately past, when from the crag  
I looked in such anxiety of hope ;  
With trite reflections of morality,  
Yet in the deepest passion, I bowed low  
To God, Who thus corrected my desires ;  
And, afterwards, the wind and sleety rain,  
And all the business of the elements,  
The single sheep, and the one blasted tree,  
And the bleak music from that old stone wall,  
The noise of wood and water, and the mist  
That on the line of each of those two roads  
Advanced in such indisputable shapes ;  
All these were kindred spectacles and sounds  
To which I oft repaired, and thence would drink,  
As at a fountain ; and on winter nights,  
Down to this very time, when storm and rain  
Beat on my roof, or, haply, at noon-day,  
While in a grove I walk, whose lofty trees,  
Laden with summer's thickest foliage, rock  
In a strong wind, some working of the spirit,  
Some inward agitations thence are brought,  
Whate'er their office, whether to beguile  
Thoughts over busy in the course they took,  
Or animate an hour of vacant ease.

## BOOK THIRTEENTH

IMAGINATION AND TASTE, HOW IMPAIRED AND RESTORED

*(concluded)*

FROM Nature doth emotion come, and moods  
Of calmness equally are Nature's gift :  
This is her glory ; these two attributes  
Are sister horns that constitute her strength.  
Hence Genius, born to thrive by interchange  
Of peace and excitation, finds in her  
His best and purest friend ; from her receives  
That energy by which he seeks the truth,  
From her that happy stillness of the mind  
Which fits him to receive it when unsought.

Such benefit the humblest intellects  
 Partake of, each in their degree ; 'tis mine  
 To speak, what I myself have known and felt ;  
 Smooth task ! for words find easy way, inspired  
 By gratitude, and confidence in truth.  
 Long time in search of knowledge did I range  
 The field of human life, in heart and mind  
 Benighted ; but, the dawn beginning now  
 To re-appear, 'twas proved that not in vain  
 I had been taught to reverence a Power  
 That is the visible quality and shape  
 And image of right reason ; that matures  
 Her processes by steadfast laws ; gives birth  
 To no impatient or fallacious hopes,  
 No heat of passion or excessive zeal,  
 No vain conceits ; provokes to no quick turns  
 Or self-applauding intellect ; but trains  
 To meekness, and exalts by humble faith ;  
 Holds up before the mind intoxicate  
 With present objects, and the busy dance  
 Of things that pass away, a temperate show  
 Of objects that endure ; and by this course  
 Disposes her, when over-fondly set  
 On throwing off incumbrances, to seek  
 In man, and in the frame of social life,  
 Whate'er there is desirable and good  
 Of kindred permanence, unchanged in form  
 And function, or, through strict vicissitude  
 Of life and death, revolving. Above all  
 Were re-established now those watchful thoughts  
 Which, seeing little worthy or sublime  
 In what the Historian's pen so much delights  
 To blazon—power and energy detached  
 From moral purpose—early tutored me  
 To look with feelings of fraternal love  
 Upon the unassuming things that hold  
 A silent station in this beauteous world.

Thus moderated, thus composed, I found  
 Once more in Man an object of delight,  
 Of pure imagination, and of love ;  
 And, as the horizon of my mind enlarged,  
 Again I took the intellectual eye  
 For my instructor, studious more to see  
 Great truths, than touch and handle little ones.

Knowledge was given accordingly ; my trust  
Became more firm in feelings that had stood  
The test of such a trial ; clearer far  
My sense of excellence—of right and wrong :  
The promise of the present time retired  
Into its true proportion ; sanguine schemes,  
Ambitious projects, pleased me less ; I sought  
For present good in life's familiar face,  
And built thereon my hopes of good to come.

With settling judgments now of what would last  
And what would disappear ; prepared to find  
Presumption, folly, madness, in the men  
Who thrust themselves upon the passive world  
As Rulers of the world ; to see in these,  
Even when the public welfare is their aim,  
Plans without thought, or built on theories  
Vague and unsound ; and having brought the books  
Of modern statists to their proper test,  
Life, human life, with all its sacred claims  
Of sex and age, and heaven-descended rights,  
Mortal, or those beyond the reach of death ;  
And having thus discerned how dire a thing  
Is worshipped in that idol proudly named  
"The Wealth of Nations," *where* alone that wealth  
Is lodged, and how increased ; and having gained  
A more judicious knowledge of the worth  
And dignity of individual man,  
No composition of the brain, but man  
Of whom we read, the man whom we behold  
With our own eyes—I could not but inquire—  
Not with less interest than heretofore,  
But greater, though in spirit more subdued—  
Why is this glorious creature to be found  
One only in ten thousand ? What one is,  
Why may not millions be ? What bars are thrown  
By Nature in the way of such a hope ?  
Our animal appetites and daily wants,  
Are these obstructions insurmountable ?  
If not, then others vanish into air.  
"Inspect the basis of the social pile :  
Inquire," said I, "how much of mental power  
And genuine virtue they possess who live  
By bodily toil, labour exceeding far  
Their due proportion, under all the weight

Of that injustice which upon ourselves  
 Ourselves entail." Such estimate to frame  
 I chiefly looked (what need to look beyond?)  
 Among the natural abodes of men,  
 Fields with their rural works; recalled to mind  
 My earliest notices; with these compared  
 The observations made in later youth,  
 And to that day continued.—For, the time  
 Had never been when throes of mighty Nations  
 And the world's tumult unto me could yield,  
 How far soe'er transported and possessed,  
 Full measure of content; but still I craved  
 An intermingling of distinct regards  
 And truths of individual sympathy  
 Nearer ourselves. Such often might be gleaned  
 From the great City, else it must have proved  
 To me a heart-depressing wilderness;  
 But much was wanting: therefore did I turn  
 To you, ye pathways, and ye lonely roads;  
 Sought you enriched with everything I prized,  
 With human kindnesses and simple joys.

Oh! next to one dear state of bliss, vouchsafed,  
 Alas! to few in this untoward world,  
 The bliss of walking daily in life's prime  
 Through field or forest with the maid we love,  
 While yet our hearts are young, while yet we breathe  
 Nothing but happiness, in some lone nook,  
 Deep vale, or anywhere, the home of both,  
 From which it would be misery to stir:  
 Oh! next to such enjoyment of our youth,  
 In my esteem, next to such dear delight,  
 Was that of wandering on from day to day  
 Where I could meditate in peace, and cull  
 Knowledge that step by step might lead me on  
 To wisdom; or, as lightsome as a bird  
 Wafted upon the wind from distant lands,  
 Sing notes of greeting to strange fields or groves,  
 Which lacked not voice to welcome me in turn:  
 And, when that pleasant toil had ceased to please,  
 Converse with men, where if we meet a face  
 We almost meet a friend, on naked heaths  
 With long long ways before, by cottage bench,  
 Or well-spring where the weary traveller rests.

Who doth not love to follow with his eye

The windings of a public way? the sight,  
Familiar object as it is, hath wrought  
On my imagination since the morn  
Of childhood, when a disappearing line,  
One daily present to my eyes, that crossed  
The naked summit of a far-off hill  
Beyond the limits that my feet had trod,  
Was like an invitation into space  
Boundless, or guide into eternity.  
Yes, something of the grandeur which invests  
The mariner, who sails the roaring sea  
Through storm and darkness, early in my mind  
Surrounded, too, the wanderers of the earth ;  
Grandeur as much, and loveliness far more.  
Awed have I been by strolling Bedlamites ;  
From many other uncouth vagrants (passed  
In fear) have walked with quicker step ; but why  
Take note of this? When I began to enquire,  
To watch and question those I met, and speak  
Without reserve to them, the lonely roads  
Were open schools in which I daily read  
With most delight the passions of mankind,  
Whether by words, looks, sighs, or tears, revealed ;  
There saw into the depth of human souls,  
Souls that appear to have no depth at all  
To careless eyes. And—now convinced at heart  
How little those formalities, to which  
With overweening trust alone we give  
The name of Education, have to do  
With real feeling and just sense ; how vain  
A correspondence with the talking world  
Proves to the most ; and called to make good search  
If man's estate, by doom of Nature yoked  
With toil, be therefore yoked with ignorance ;  
If virtue be indeed so hard to rear,  
And intellectual strength so rare a boon—  
I prized such walks still more, for there I found  
Hope to my hope, and to my pleasure peace  
And steadiness, and healing and repose  
To every angry passion. There I heard,  
From mouths of men obscure and lowly, truths  
Replete with honour ; sounds in unison  
With loftiest promises of good and fair.

There are who think that strong affection, love

Known by whatever name, is falsely deemed  
 A gift, to use a term which they would use,  
 Of vulgar nature ; that its growth requires  
 Retirement, leisure, language purified  
 By manners studied and elaborate ;  
 That whoso feels such passion in its strength  
 Must live within the very light and air  
 Of courteous usages refined by art.  
 True is it, where oppression worse than death  
 Salutes the being at his birth, where grace  
 Of culture hath been utterly unknown,  
 And poverty and labour in excess  
 From day to day pre-occupy the ground  
 Of the affections, and to Nature's self  
 Oppose a deeper nature ; there, indeed,  
 Love cannot be ; nor does it thrive with ease  
 Among the close and overcrowded haunts  
 Of cities, where the human heart is sick,  
 And the eye feeds it not, and cannot feed.  
 —Yes, in those wanderings deeply did I feel  
 How we mislead each other ; above all,  
 How books mislead us, seeking their reward  
 From judgments of the wealthy Few, who see  
 By artificial lights ; how they debase  
 The Many for the pleasure of those Few ;  
 Effeminately level down the truth  
 To certain general notions, for the sake  
 Of being understood at once, or else  
 Through want of better knowledge in the heads  
 That framed them ; flattering self-conceit with words,  
 That, while they most ambitiously set forth  
 Extrinsic differences, the outward marks  
 Whereby society has parted man  
 From man, neglect the universal heart.

Here, calling up to mind what then I saw,  
 A youthful traveller, and see daily now  
 In the familiar circuit of my home,  
 Here might I pause, and bend in reverence  
 To Nature, and the power of human minds,  
 To men as they are men within themselves.  
 How oft high service is performed within,  
 When all the external man is rude in show,—  
 Not like a temple rich with pomp and gold,  
 But a mere mountain chapel, that protects

Its simple worshippers from sun and shower.  
Of these, said I, shall be my song ; of these,  
If future years mature me for the task,  
Will I record the praises, making verse  
Deal boldly with substantial things ; in truth  
And sanctity of passion, speak of these,  
That justice may be done, obeisance paid  
Where it is due : thus haply shall I teach,  
Inspire ; through unadulterated ears  
Pour rapture, tenderness, and hope,—my theme  
No other than the very heart of man,  
As found among the best of those who live—  
Not unexalted by religious faith,  
Nor uninformed by books, good books, though few—  
In Nature's presence : thence may I select  
Sorrow, that is not sorrow, but delight ;  
And miserable love, that is not pain  
To hear of, for the glory that redounds  
Therefrom to human kind, and what we are.  
Be mine to follow with no timid step  
Where knowledge leads me : it shall be my pride  
That I have dared to tread this holy ground,  
Speaking no dream, but things oracular ;  
Matter not lightly to be heard by those  
Who to the letter of the outward promise  
Do read the invisible soul ; by men adroit  
In speech, and for communion with the world  
Accomplished ; minds whose faculties are then  
Most active when they are most eloquent,  
And elevated most when most admired.  
Men may be found of other mould than these,  
Who are their own upholders, to themselves  
Encouragement, and energy, and will,  
Expressing liveliest thoughts in lively words  
As native passion dictates. Others, too,  
There are among the walks of homely life  
Still higher, men for contemplation framed,  
Shy, and unpractised in the strife of phrase ;  
Meek men, whose very souls perhaps would sink  
Beneath them, summoned to such intercourse :  
Theirs is the language of the heavens, the power,  
The thought, the image, and the silent joy :  
Words are but under-agents in their souls ;  
When they are grasping with their greatest strength,  
They do not breathe among them : this I speak

In gratitude to God, Who feeds our hearts  
For His own service ; knoweth, loveth us,  
When we are unregarded by the world.

Also, about this time did I receive  
Convictions still more strong than heretofore,  
Not only that the inner frame is good,  
And graciously composed, but that, no less,  
Nature for all conditions wants not power  
To consecrate, if we have eyes to see,  
The outside of her creatures, and to breathe  
Grandeur upon the very humblest face  
Of human life. I felt that the array  
Of act and circumstance, and visible form,  
Is mainly to the pleasure of the mind  
What passion makes them ; that meanwhile the forms  
Of Nature have a passion in themselves,  
That intermingles with those works of man  
To which she summons him ; although the works  
Be mean, have nothing lofty of their own ;  
And that the Genius of the Poet hence  
May boldly take his way among mankind  
Wherever Nature leads ; that he hath stood  
By Nature's side among the men of old,  
And so shall stand for ever. Dearest Friend !  
If thou partake the animating faith  
That Poets, even as Prophets, each with each  
Connected in a mighty scheme of truth,  
Have each his own peculiar faculty,  
Heaven's gift, a sense that fits him to perceive  
Objects unseen before, thou wilt not blame  
The humblest of this band who dares to hope  
That unto him hath also been vouchsafed  
An insight that in some sort he possesses,  
A privilege whereby a work of his,  
Proceeding from a source of untaught things,  
Creative and enduring, may become  
A power like one of Nature's. To a hope  
Not less ambitious once among the wilds  
Of Sarum's Plain, my youthful spirit was raised ;  
There, as I ranged at will the pastoral downs  
Trackless and smooth, or paced the bare white roads  
Lengthening in solitude their dreary line,  
Time with his retinue of ages fled  
Backwards, nor checked his flight until I saw

Our dim ancestral Past in vision clear ;  
Saw multitudes of men, and, here and there,  
A single Briton clothed in wolf-skin vest,  
With shield and stone-axe, stride across the wold ;  
The voice of spears was heard, the rattling spear  
Shaken by arms of mighty bone, in strength,  
Long mouldered, of barbaric majesty.  
I called on Darkness—but before the word  
Was uttered, midnight darkness seemed to take  
All objects from my sight ; and lo ! again  
The Desert visible by dismal flames ;  
It is the sacrificial altar, fed  
With living men—how deep the groans ! the voice  
Of those that crowd the giant wicker thrills  
The monumental hillocks, and the pomp  
Is for both worlds, the living and the dead.  
At other moments—(for through that wide waste  
Three summer days I roamed) where'er the Plain  
Was figured o'er with circles, lines, or mounds,  
That yet survive, a work, as some divine,  
Shaped by the Druids, so to represent  
Their knowledge of the heavens, and image forth  
The constellations—gently was I charmed  
Into a waking dream, a reverie  
That, with believing eyes, where'er I turned,  
Beheld long-bearded teachers, with white wands  
Uplifted, pointing to the starry sky,  
Alternately, and plain below, while breath  
Of music swayed their motions, and the waste  
Rejoiced with them and me in those sweet sounds.

This for the past, and things that may be viewed  
Or fancied in the obscurity of years  
From monumental hints : and thou, O Friend !  
Pleased with some unpremeditated strains  
That served those wanderings to beguile, hast said  
That then and there my mind had exercised  
Upon the vulgar forms of present things,  
The actual world of our familiar days,  
Yet higher power ; had caught from them a tone,  
An image, and a character, by books  
Not hitherto reflected. Call we this  
A partial judgment—and yet why ? for *then*  
We were as strangers ; and I may not speak  
Thus wrongfully of verse, however rude,

Which on thy young imagination, trained  
 In the great City, broke like light from far.  
 Moreover, each man's Mind is to herself  
 Witness and judge; and I remember well  
 That in life's every-day appearances  
 I seemed about this time to gain clear sight  
 Of a new world—a world, too, that was fit  
 To be transmitted, and to other eyes  
 Made visible; as ruled by those fixed laws  
 Whence spiritual dignity originates,  
 Which do both give it being and maintain  
 A balance, an ennobling interchange  
 Of action from without and from within;  
 The excellence, pure function, and best power  
 Both of the objects seen, and eye that sees.

## BOOK FOURTEENTH

## CONCLUSION

IN one of those excursions (may they ne'er  
 Fade from remembrance!) through the Northern tracts  
 Of Cambria ranging with a youthful friend,  
 I left Bethgelert's huts at couching-time,  
 And westward took my way, to see the sun  
 Rise, from the top of Snowdon. To the door  
 Of a rude cottage at the mountain's base  
 We came, and roused the shepherd who attends  
 The adventurous stranger's steps, a trusty guide;  
 Then, cheered by short refreshment, sallied forth.

It was a close, warm, breezeless summer night,  
 Wan, dull, and glaring, with a dripping fog  
 Low-hung and thick that covered all the sky;  
 But, undiscouraged, we began to climb  
 The mountain-side. The mist soon girt us round,  
 And, after ordinary travellers' talk  
 With our conductor, pensively we sank  
 Each into commerce with his private thoughts:  
 Thus did we breast the ascent, and by myself  
 Was nothing either seen or heard that checked  
 Those musings or diverted, save that once  
 The shepherd's lurcher, who, among the crags,  
 Had to his joy unearthed a hedgehog, teased  
 His coiled-up prey with barking turbulent.  
 This small adventure, for even such it seemed

In that wild place and at the dead of night,  
Being over and forgotten, on we wound  
In silence as before. With forehead bent  
Earthward, as if in opposition set  
Against an enemy, I panted up  
With eager pace, and no less eager thoughts.  
Thus might we wear a midnight hour away,  
Ascending at loose distance each from each,  
And I, as chanced, the foremost of the band ;  
When at my feet the ground appeared to brighten,  
And with a step or two seemed brighter still ;  
Nor was time given to ask or learn the cause,  
For instantly a light upon the turf  
Fell like a flash, and lo ! as I looked up,  
The Moon hung naked in a firmament  
Of azure without cloud, and at my feet  
Rested a silent sea of hoary mist.  
A hundred hills their dusky backs upheaved  
All over this still ocean ; and beyond,  
Far, far beyond, the solid vapours stretched,  
In headlands, tongues, and promontory shapes,  
Into the main Atlantic, that appeared  
To dwindle, and give up his majesty,  
Usurped upon far as the sight could reach.  
Not so the ethereal vault ; encroachment none  
Was there, nor loss ; only the inferior stars  
Had disappeared, or shed a fainter light  
In the clear presence of the full-orbed Moon,  
Who, from her sovereign elevation, gazed  
Upon the billowy ocean, as it lay  
All meek and silent, save that through a rift—  
Not distant from the shore whereon we stood,  
A fixed, abysmal, gloomy, breathing-place—  
Mounted the roar of waters, torrents, streams  
Innumerable, roaring with one voice !  
Heard over earth and sea, and, in that hour,  
For so it seemed, felt by the starry heavens.

When into air had partially dissolved  
That vision, given to spirits of the night  
And three chance human wanderers, in calm thought  
Reflected, it appeared to me the type  
Of a majestic intellect, its acts  
And its possessions, what it has and craves,  
What in itself it is, and would become.

There I beheld the emblem of a mind  
That feeds upon infinity, that broods  
Over the dark abyss, intent to hear  
Its voices issuing forth to silent light  
In one continuous stream ; a mind sustained  
By recognitions of transcendent power,  
In sense conducting to ideal form,  
In soul of more than mortal privilege.  
One function, above all, of such a mind  
Had Nature shadowed there, by putting forth,  
'Mid circumstances awful and sublime,  
That mutual domination which she loves  
To exert upon the face of outward things,  
So moulded, joined, abstracted, so endowed  
With interchangeable supremacy,  
That men, least sensitive, see, hear, perceive,  
And cannot choose but feel. The power, which all  
Acknowledge when thus moved, which Nature thus  
To bodily sense exhibits, is the express  
Resemblance of that glorious faculty  
That higher minds bear with them as their own.  
This is the very spirit in which they deal  
With the whole compass of the universe :  
They from their native selves can send abroad  
Kindred mutations ; for themselves create  
A like existence ; and, whene'er it dawns  
Created for them, catch it, or are caught  
By its inevitable mastery,  
Like angels stopped upon the wing by sound  
Of harmony from Heaven's remotest spheres.  
Them the enduring and the transient both  
Serve to exalt ; they build up greatest things  
From least suggestions ; ever on the watch,  
Willing to work and to be wrought upon,  
They need not extraordinary calls  
To rouse them ; in a world of life they live,  
By sensible impressions not enthralled,  
But by their quickening impulse made more prompt  
To hold fit converse with the spiritual world,  
And with the generations of mankind  
Spread over time, past, present, and to come,  
Age after age, till Time shall be no more.  
Such minds are truly from the Deity,  
For they are Powers ; and hence the highest bliss  
That flesh can know is theirs—the consciousness

Of Whom they are, habitually infused  
Through every image and through every thought,  
And all affections by communion raised  
From earth to heaven, from human to divine ;  
Hence endless occupation for the Soul,  
Whether discursive or intuitive ;  
Hence cheerfulness for acts of daily life,  
Emotions which best foresight need not fear,  
Most worthy then of trust when most intense.  
Hence, amid ills that vex and wrongs that crush  
Our hearts—if here the words of Holy Writ  
May with fit reverence be applied—that peace  
Which passeth understanding, that repose  
In moral judgments which from this pure source  
Must come, or will by man be sought in vain.

Oh ! who is he that hath his whole life long  
Preserved, enlarged, this freedom in himself ?  
For this alone is genuine liberty :  
Where is the favoured being who hath held  
That course unchecked, unerring, and untired,  
In one perpetual progress smooth and bright ?—  
A humbler destiny have we retraced,  
And told of lapse and hesitating choice,  
And backward wanderings along thorny ways :  
Yet—compassed round by mountain solitudes,  
Within whose solemn temple I received  
My earliest visitations, careless then  
Of what was given me ; and which now I range,  
A meditative, oft a suffering, man—  
Do I declare—in accents which, from truth  
Deriving cheerful confidence, shall blend  
Their modulation with these vocal streams—  
That, whatsoever falls my better mind,  
Revolving with the accidents of life,  
May have sustained, that, howsoe'er misled,  
Never did I, in quest of right and wrong,  
Tamper with conscience from a private aim ;  
Nor was in any public hope the dupe  
Of selfish passions ; nor did ever yield  
Wilfully to mean cares or low pursuits,  
But shrunk with apprehensive jealousy  
From every combination which might aid  
The tendency, too potent in itself,  
Of use and custom to bow down the soul

Under a growing weight of vulgar sense,  
 And substitute a universe of death  
 For that which moves with light and life informed,  
 Actual, divine, and true. To fear and love,  
 To love as prime and chief, for there fear ends,  
 Be this ascribed ; to early intercourse,  
 In presence of sublime or beautiful forms,  
 With the adverse principles of pain and joy—  
 Evil as one is rashly named by men  
 Who know not what they speak. By love subsists  
 All lasting grandeur, by pervading love ;  
 That gone, we are as dust.—Behold the fields  
 In balmy spring-time full of rising flowers  
 And joyous creatures ; see that pair, the lamb  
 And the lamb's mother, and their tender ways  
 Shall touch thee to the heart ; thou callest this love,  
 And not inaptly so, for love it is,  
 Far as it carries thee. In some green bower  
 Rest, and be not alone, but have thou there  
 The One who is thy choice of all the world :  
 There linger, listening, gazing, with delight  
 Impassioned, but delight how pitiable !  
 Unless this love by a still higher love  
 Be hallowed, love that breathes not without awe ;  
 Love that adores, but on the knees of prayer,  
 By heaven inspired ; that frees from chains the soul,  
 Lifted, in union with the purest, best,  
 Of earth-born passions, on the wings of praise  
 Bearing a tribute to the Almighty's Throne.

This spiritual Love acts not nor can exist  
 Without Imagination, which, in truth,  
 Is but another name for absolute power  
 And clearest insight, amplitude of mind,  
 And Reason in her most exalted mood.  
 This faculty hath been the feeding source  
 Of our long labour : we have traced the stream  
 From the blind cavern whence is faintly heard  
 Its natal murmur ; followed it to light  
 And open day ; accompanied its course  
 Among the ways of Nature, for a time  
 Lost sight of it bewildered and engulfed ;  
 Then given it greeting as it rose once more  
 In strength, reflecting from its placid breast  
 The works of man and face of human life ;

And lastly, from its progress have we drawn  
Faith in life endless, the sustaining thought  
Of human Being, Eternity, and God.

Imagination having been our theme,  
So also hath that intellectual Love,  
For they are each in each, and cannot stand  
Dividually.—Here must thou be, O Man !  
Power to thyself ; no Helper hast thou here ;  
Here keepest thou in singleness thy state :  
No other can divide with thee this work :  
No secondary hand can intervene  
To fashion this ability ; 'tis thine,  
The prime and vital principle is thine  
In the recesses of thy nature, far  
From any reach of outward fellowship,  
Else is not thine at all. But joy to him,  
Oh, joy to him who here hath sown, hath laid  
Here, the foundation of his future years !  
For all that friendship, all that love can do,  
All that a darling countenance can look  
Or dear voice utter, to complete the man,  
Perfect him, made imperfect in himself,  
All shall be his : and he whose soul hath risen  
Up to the height of feeling intellect  
Shall want no humbler tenderness ; his heart  
Be tender as a nursing mother's heart ;  
Of female softness shall his life be full,  
Of humble cares and delicate desires,  
Mild interests and gentlest sympathies.

Child of my parents ! Sister of my soul !  
Thanks in sincerest verse have been elsewhere  
Poured out for all the early tenderness  
Which I from thee imbibed : and 'tis most true  
That later seasons owed to thee no less ;  
For, spite of thy sweet influence and the touch  
Of kindred hands that opened out the springs  
Of genial thought in childhood, and in spite  
Of all that unassisted I had marked  
In life or nature of those charms minute  
That win their way into the heart by stealth  
(Still to the very going-out of youth)  
I too exclusively esteemed *that* love,  
And sought *that* beauty, which, as Milton sings,  
Hath terror in it. Thou didst soften down

This over-stereness ; but for thee, dear Friend !  
 My soul, too reckless of mild grace, had stood  
 In her original self too confident,  
 Retained too long a countenance severe ;  
 A rock with torrents roaring, with the clouds  
 Familiar, and a favourite of the stars :  
 But thou didst plant its crevices with flowers,  
 Hang it with shrubs that twinkle in the breeze,  
 And teach the little birds to build their nests  
 And warble in its chambers. At a time  
 When Nature, destined to remain so long  
 Foremost in my affections, had fallen back  
 Into a second place, pleased to become  
 A handmaid to a nobler than herself,  
 When every day brought with it some new sense  
 Of exquisite regard for common things,  
 And all the earth was budding with these gifts  
 Of more refined humanity, thy breath,  
 Dear Sister ! was a kind of gentler spring  
 That went before my steps. Thereafter came  
 One whom with thee friendship had early paired ;  
 She came, no more a phantom to adorn  
 A moment, but an inmate of the heart,  
 And yet a spirit, there for me enshrined  
 To penetrate the lofty and the low ;  
 Even as one essence of pervading light  
 Shines, in the brightest of ten thousand stars  
 And the meek worm that feeds her lonely lamp  
 Couched in the dewy grass.

With such a theme,  
 Coleridge ! with this my argument, of thee  
 Shall I be silent ? O capacious Soul !  
 Placed on this earth to love and understand,  
 And from thy presence shed the light of love,  
 Shall I be mute, ere thou be spoken of ?  
 Thy kindred influence to my heart of hearts  
 Did also find its way. Thus fear relaxed  
 Her overweening grasp ; thus thoughts and things  
 In the self-haunting spirit learned to take  
 More rational proportions ; mystery,  
 The incumbent mystery of sense and soul,  
 Of life and death, time and eternity,  
 Admitted more habitually a mild  
 Interposition—a serene delight  
 In closelier gathering cares, such as become

A human creature, howsoe'er endowed,  
Poet, or destined for a humbler name ;  
And so the deep enthusiastic joy,  
The rapture of the hallelujah sent  
From all that breathes and is, was chastened, stemmed  
And balanced by pathetic truth, by trust  
In hopeful reason, leaning on the stay  
Of Providence ; and in reverence for duty,  
Here, if need be, struggling with storms, and there  
Strewing in peace life's humblest ground with herbs,  
At every season green, sweet at all hours.

And now, O Friend ! this history is brought  
To its appointed close : the discipline  
And consummation of a Poet's mind,  
In everything that stood most prominent,  
Have faithfully been pictured : we have reached  
The time (our guiding object from the first)  
When we may, not presumptuously, I hope,  
Suppose my powers so far confirmed, and such  
My knowledge, as to make me capable  
Of building up a Work that shall endure.  
Yet much hath been omitted, as need was ;  
Of books how much ! and even of the other wealth  
That is collected among woods and fields,  
Far more : for Nature's secondary grace  
Hath hitherto been barely touched upon,  
The charm more superficial that attends  
Her works, as they present to Fancy's choice  
Apt illustrations of the moral world,  
Caught at a glance, or traced with curious pains.

Finally, and above all, O Friend ! (I speak  
With due regret) how much is overlooked  
In human nature and her subtle ways,  
As studied first in our own hearts, and then  
In life among the passions of mankind,  
Varying their composition and their hue,  
Where'er we move, under the diverse shapes  
That individual character presents  
To an attentive eye. For progress meet,  
Along this intricate and difficult path,  
Whate'er was wanting, something had I gained,  
As one of many schoolfellows compelled,  
In hardy independence, to stand up  
Amid conflicting interests, and the shock

Of various tempers ; to endure and note  
 What was not understood, though known to be ;  
 Among the mysteries of love and hate,  
 Honour and shame, looking to right and left,  
 Unchecked by innocence too delicate,  
 And moral notions too intolerant,  
 Sympathies too contracted. Hence, when called  
 To take a station among men, the step  
 Was easier, the transition more secure,  
 More profitable also ; for, the mind  
 Learns from such timely exercise to keep  
 In wholesome separation the two natures,  
 The one that feels, the other that observes.

Yet one word more of personal concern ;—  
 Since I withdrew unwillingly from France,  
 I led an undomestic wanderer's life,  
 In London chiefly harboured, whence I roamed,  
 Tarrying at will in many a pleasant spot  
 Of rural England's cultivated vales  
 Or Cambrian solitudes. A youth—(he bore  
 The name of Calvert—it shall live, if words  
 Of mine can give it life,) in firm belief  
 That by endowments not from me withheld  
 Good might be furthered—in his last decay  
 By a bequest sufficient for my needs  
 Enabled me to pause for choice, and walk  
 At large and unrestrained, nor damped too soon  
 By mortal cares. Himself no Poet, yet  
 Far less a common follower of the world,  
 He deemed that my pursuits and labours lay  
 Apart from all that leads to wealth, or even  
 A necessary maintenance insures,  
 Without some hazard to the finer sense ;  
 He cleared a passage for me, and the stream  
 Flowed in the bent of Nature.

Having now  
 Told what best merits mention, further pains  
 Our present purpose seems not to require,  
 And I have other tasks. Recall to mind  
 The mood in which this labour was begun,  
 O Friend ! The termination of my course  
 Is nearer now, much nearer ; yet even then,  
 In that distraction and intense desire,  
 I said unto the life which I had lived,

Where art thou? Hear I not a voice from thee  
Which 'tis reproach to hear? Anon I rose  
As if on wings, and saw beneath me stretched  
Vast prospect of the world which I had been  
And was; and hence this Song, which, like a lark,  
I have protracted, in the unwearied heavens  
Singing, and often with more plaintive voice  
To earth attempered and her deep-drawn sighs,  
Yet centring all in love, and in the end  
All gratulant, if rightly understood.

Whether to me shall be allotted life,  
And, with life, power to accomplish aught of worth,  
That will be deemed no insufficient plea  
For having given the story of myself,  
Is all uncertain: but, beloved Friend!  
When, looking back, thou seest, in clearer view  
Than any liveliest sight of yesterday,  
That summer, under whose indulgent skies,  
Upon smooth Quantock's airy ridge we roved  
Unchecked, or loitered 'mid her sylvan combs,  
Thou in bewitching words, with happy heart,  
Didst chaunt the vision of that Ancient Man,  
The bright-eyed Mariner, and rueful woes  
Didst utter of the Lady Christabel;  
And I, associate with such labour, steeped  
In soft forgetfulness the livelong hours,  
Murmuring of him who, joyous hap, was found,  
After the perils of his moonlight ride,  
Near the loud waterfall; or her who sate  
In misery near the miserable Thorn—  
When thou dost to that summer turn thy thoughts,  
And hast before thee all which then we were,  
To thee, in memory of that happiness,  
It will be known, by thee at least, my Friend!  
Felt, that the history of a Poet's mind  
Is labour not unworthy of regard;  
To thee the work shall justify itself.

The last and later portions of this gift  
Have been prepared, not with the buoyant spirits  
That were our daily portion when we first  
Together wanted in wild Poesy,  
But, under pressure of a private grief,  
Keen and enduring, which the mind and heart,  
That in this meditative history

Have been laid open, needs must make me feel  
 More deeply, yet enable me to bear  
 More firmly ; and a comfort now hath risen  
 From hope that thou art near, and wilt be soon  
 Restored to us in renovated health ;  
 When, after the first mingling of our tears,  
 'Mong other consolations, we may draw  
 Some pleasure from this offering of my love.

Oh ! yet a few short years of useful life,  
 And all will be complete, thy race be run,  
 Thy monument of glory will be raised ;  
 Then, though (too weak to treat the ways of truth)  
 This age fall back to old idolatry,  
 Though men return to servitude as fast  
 As the tide ebbs, to ignominy and shame,  
 By nations, sink together, we shall still  
 Find solace—knowing what we have learnt to know,  
 Rich in true happiness if allowed to be  
 Faithful alike in forwarding a day  
 Of firmer trust, joint labourers in the work  
 (Should Providence such grace to us vouchsafe)  
 Of their deliverance, surely yet to come.  
 Prophets of Nature, we to them will speak  
 A lasting inspiration, sanctified  
 By reason, blest by faith : what we have loved,  
 Others will love, and we will teach them how ;  
 Instruct them how the mind of man becomes  
 A thousand times more beautiful than the earth  
 On which he dwells, above this frame of things  
 (Which, 'mid all revolution in the hopes  
 And fears of men, doth still remain unchanged)  
 In beauty exalted, as it is itself  
 Of quality and fabric more divine.  
 (1799-1805)

## THE EXCURSION

TO THE RIGHT HON.

WILLIAM, EARL OF LONSDALE, K.G.

ETC. ETC.

OFT, through thy fair domains, illustrious Peer !  
 In youth I roamed, on youthful pleasures bent ;  
 And mused in rocky cell or sylvan tent,  
 Beside swift-flowing Lowther's current clear.  
 —Now, by thy care befriended, I appear  
 Before thee, LONSDALE, and this Work present,  
 A token (may it prove a monument !) of  
 Of high respect and gratitude sincere.  
 Gladly would I have waited till my task  
 Had reached its close ; but Life is insecure,  
 And Hope full oft fallacious as a dream :  
 Therefore, for what is here produced, I ask  
 Thy favour ; trusting that thou wilt not deem  
 The offering, though imperfect, premature.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

RYDAL MOUNT, WESTMORELAND,

July 29, 1814.

## BOOK FIRST

## THE WANDERER

## ARGUMENT

*A summer forenoon—The Author reaches a ruined Cottage upon a Common, and there meets with a revered Friend, the Wanderer, of whose education and course of life he gives an account—The Wanderer, while resting under the shade of the Trees that surround the Cottage, relates the history of its last Inhabitant.*

'TWAS summer, and the sun had mounted high :  
 Southward the landscape indistinctly glared  
 Through a pale steam ; but all the northern downs,  
 In clearest air ascending, showed far off  
 A surface dappled o'er with shadows flung  
 From brooding clouds ; shadows that lay in spots  
 Determined and unmoved, with steady beams  
 Of bright and pleasant sunshine interposed ;  
 To him most pleasant who on soft cool moss  
 Extends his careless limbs along the front  
 Of some huge cave, whose rocky ceiling casts  
 A twilight of its own, an ample shade,  
 Where the wren warbles, while the dreaming man,  
 Half conscious of the soothing melody,

With side-long eye looks out upon the scene,  
By power of that impending covert, thrown  
To finer distance. Mine was at that hour  
Far other lot, yet with good hope that soon  
Under a shade as grateful I should find  
Rest, and be welcomed there to livelier joy.  
Across a bare wide Common I was toiling  
With languid steps that by the slippery turf  
Were baffled ; nor could my weak arm disperse  
The host of insects gathering round my face,  
And ever with me as I paced along.

Upon that open moorland stood a grove,  
The wished-for port to which my course was bound.  
Thither I came, and there, amid the gloom  
Spread by a brotherhood of lofty elms,  
Appeared a roofless Hut ; four naked walls  
That stared upon each other !—I looked round,  
And to my wish and to my hope espied  
The Friend I sought ; a Man of reverend age,  
But stout and hale, for travel unimpaired.  
There was he seen upon the cottage-bench,  
Recumbent in the shade, as if asleep ;  
An iron-pointed staff lay at his side.

Him had I marked the day before—alone  
And stationed in the public way, with face  
Turned toward the sun then setting, while that staff  
Afforded, to the figure of the man  
Detained for contemplation or repose,  
Graceful support ; his countenance as he stood  
Was hidden from my view, and he remained  
Unrecognised ; but, stricken by the sight,  
With slackened footsteps I advanced, and soon  
A glad congratulation we exchanged  
At such unthought-of meeting.—For the night  
We parted, nothing willingly ; and now  
He by appointment waited for me here,  
Under the covert of these clustering elms.

We were tried Friends : amid a pleasant vale,  
In the antique market-village where was passed  
My school-time, an apartment he had owned,  
To which at intervals the Wanderer drew,  
And found a kind of home or harbour there.  
He loved me ; from a swarm of rosy boys

Singled out me, as he in sport would say,  
For my grave looks, too thoughtful for my years.  
As I grew up, it was my best delight  
To be his chosen comrade. Many a time,  
On holidays, we rambled through the woods :  
We sate—we walked ; he pleased me with report  
Of things which he had seen ; and often touched  
Abstrusest matter, reasonings of the mind  
Turned inward ; or at my request would sing  
Old songs, the product of his native hills ;  
A skilful distribution of sweet sounds,  
Feeding the soul, and eagerly imbibed  
As cool refreshing water, by the care  
Of the industrious husbandman, diffused  
Through a parched meadow-ground, in time of drought.  
Still deeper welcome found his pure discourse ;  
How precious, when in riper days I learned  
To weigh with care his words, and to rejoice  
In the plain presence of his dignity !

Oh ! many are the Poets that are sown  
By Nature ; men endowed with highest gifts,  
The vision and the faculty divine ;  
Yet wanting the accomplishment of verse,  
(Which, in the docile season of their youth,  
It was denied them to acquire, through lack  
Of culture and the inspiring aid of books,  
Or haply by a temper too severe,  
Or a nice backwardness afraid of shame)  
Nor having e'er, as life advanced, been led  
By circumstance to take unto the height  
The measure of themselves, these favoured Beings,  
All but a scattered few, live out their time,  
Husbanding that which they possess within,  
And go to the grave, unthought of. Strongest minds  
Are often those of whom the noisy world  
Hears least ; else surely this Man had not left  
His graces unrevealed and unproclaimed.  
But, as the mind was filled with inward light,  
So not without distinction had he lived,  
Beloved and honoured—far as he was known.  
And some small portion of his eloquent speech,  
And something that may serve to set in view  
The feeling pleasures of his loneliness,  
His observations, and the thoughts his mind

Had dealt with—I will here record in verse ;  
Which, if with truth it correspond, and sink  
Or rise as venerable Nature leads,  
The high and tender Muses shall accept  
With gracious smile, deliberately pleased,  
And listening Time reward with sacred praise.

Among the hills of Athol he was born ;  
Where, on a small hereditary farm,  
An unproductive slip of rugged ground,  
His Parents, with their numerous offspring, dwelt ;  
A virtuous household, though exceeding poor !  
Pure livers were they all, austere and grave,  
And fearing God ; the very children taught  
Stern self-respect, a reverence for God's word,  
And an habitual piety, maintained  
With strictness scarcely known on English ground.

From his sixth year, the Boy of whom I speak,  
In summer, tended cattle on the hills ;  
But, through the inclement and the perilous days  
Of long-continuing winter, he repaired,  
Equipped with satchel, to a school, that stood  
Sole building on a mountain's dreary edge,  
Remote from view of city spire, or sound  
Of minster clock ! From that bleak tenement  
He, many an evening, to his distant home  
In solitude returning, saw the hills  
Grow larger in the darkness ; all alone  
Beheld the stars come out above his head,  
And travelled through the wood, with no one near  
To whom he might confess the things he saw.

So the foundations of his mind were laid.  
In such communion, not from terror free,  
While yet a child, and long before his time,  
Had he perceived the presence and the power  
Of greatness ; and deep feelings had impressed  
So vividly great objects that they lay  
Upon his mind like substances, whose presence  
Perplexed the bodily sense. He had received  
A precious gift ; for, as he grew in years,  
With these impressions would he still compare  
All his remembrances, thoughts, shapes, and forms ;  
And, being still unsatisfied with aught  
Of dimmer character, he thence attained

An active power to fasten images  
Upon his brain ; and on their pictured lines  
Intensely brooded, even till they acquired  
The liveliness of dreams. Nor did he fail,  
While yet a child, with a child's eagerness  
Incessantly to turn his ear and eye  
On all things which the moving seasons brought  
To feed such appetite—nor this alone  
Appeased his yearning :—in the after-day  
Of boyhood, many an hour in caves forlorn,  
And 'mid the hollow depths of naked crags  
He sate, and even in their fixed lineaments,  
Or from the power of a peculiar eye,  
Or by creative feeling overborne,  
Or by predominance of thought oppressed,  
Even in their fixed and steady lineaments  
He traced an ebbing and a flowing mind,  
Expression ever varying !

Thus informed,  
He had small need of books ; for many a tale  
Traditionary, round the mountains hung,  
And many a legend, peopling the dark woods,  
Nourished Imagination in her growth,  
And gave the Mind that apprehensive power  
By which she is made quick to recognise  
The moral properties and scope of things.  
But eagerly he read, and read again,  
Whate'er the minister's old shelf supplied ;  
The life and death of martyrs, who sustained,  
With will inflexible, those fearful pangs  
Triumphantly displayed in records left  
Of persecution, and the Covenant—times  
Whose echo rings through Scotland to this hour !  
And there, by lucky hap, had been preserved  
A straggling volume, torn and incomplete,  
That left half-told the preternatural tale,  
Romance of giants, chronicle of fiends,  
Profuse in garniture of wooden cuts  
Strange and uncouth ; dire faces, figures dire,  
Sharp-kneed, sharp-elbowed, and lean-ankled too,  
With long and ghostly shanks—forms which once seen  
Could never be forgotten !

In his heart,  
Where Fear sate thus, a cherished visitant,  
Was wanting yet the pure delight of love

By sound diffused, or by the breathing air,  
 Or by the silent looks of happy things,  
 Or flowing from the universal face  
 Of earth and sky. But he had felt the power  
 Of Nature, and already was prepared,  
 By his intense conceptions, to receive  
 Deeply the lesson deep of love which he,  
 Whom Nature, by whatever means, has taught  
 To feel intensely, cannot but receive.

Such was the Boy—but for the growing Youth  
 What soul was his, when, from the naked top  
 Of some bold headland, he beheld the sun  
 Rise up, and bathe the world in light! He looked—  
 Ocean and earth, the solid frame of earth  
 And ocean's liquid mass, in gladness lay  
 Beneath him:—Far and wide the clouds were touched,  
 And in their silent faces could he read  
 Unutterable love. Sound needed none,  
 Nor any voice of joy; his spirit drank  
 The spectacle: sensation, soul, and form,  
 All melted into him; they swallowed up  
 His animal being; in them did he live,  
 And by them did he live; they were his life.  
 In such access of mind, in such high hour  
 Of visitation from the living God,  
 Thought was not; in enjoyment it expired.  
 No thanks he breathed, he proffered no request;  
 Rapt into still communion that transcends  
 The imperfect offices of prayer and praise,  
 His mind was a thanksgiving to the power  
 That made him; it was blessedness and love!

A Herdsman on the lonely mountain tops,  
 Such intercourse was his, and in this sort  
 Was his existence oftentimes *possessed*.  
 O then how beautiful, how bright, appeared  
 The written promise! Early had he learned  
 To reverence the volume that displays  
 The mystery, the life which cannot die;  
 But in the mountains did he *feel* his faith.  
 All things, responsive to the writing, there  
 Breathed immortality, revolving life,  
 And greatness still revolving; infinite:  
 There littleness was not; the least of things

Seemed infinite ; and there his spirit shaped  
Her prospects, nor did he believe,—he *saw*.  
What wonder if his being thus became  
Sublime and comprehensive ! Low desires,  
Low thoughts had there no place ; yet was his heart  
Lowly ; for he was meek in gratitude,  
Oft as he called those ecstasies to mind,  
And whence they flowed ; and from them he acquired  
Wisdom, which works through patience ; thence he learned  
In oft-recurring hours of sober thought  
To look on Nature with a humble heart.  
Self-questioned where it did not understand,  
And with a superstitious eye of love.

So passed the time ; yet to the nearest town  
He duly went with what small overplus  
His earnings might supply, and brought away  
The book that most had tempted his desires  
While at the stall he read. Among the hills  
He gazed upon that mighty orb of song,  
The divine Milton. Lore of different kind,  
The annual savings of a toilsome life,  
His Schoolmaster supplied ; books that explain  
The purer elements of truth involved  
In lines and numbers, and, by charm severe,  
(Especially perceived where nature droops  
And feeling is suppressed) preserve the mind  
Busy in solitude and poverty.  
These occupations oftentimes deceived  
The listless hours, while in the hollow vale,  
Hollow and green, he lay on the green turf  
In pensive idleness. What could he do,  
Thus daily thirsting, in that lonesome life,  
With blind endeavours ? Yet, still uppermost,  
Nature was at his heart as if he felt,  
Though yet he knew not how, a wasting power  
In all things that from her sweet influence  
Might tend to wean him. Therefore with her hues,  
Her forms, and with the spirit of her forms,  
He clothed the nakedness of austere truth.  
While yet he lingered in the rudiments  
Of science, and among her simplest laws,  
His triangles—they were the stars of heaven,  
The silent stars ! Oft did he take delight  
To measure the altitude of some tall crag

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 Or flowing from the universal face  
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The silent stars ! Oft did he take delight  
To measure the altitude of some tall crag

That is the eagle's birth-place, or some peak  
Familiar with forgotten years, that shows,  
Inscribed upon its visionary sides,  
The history of many a winter storm,  
Or obscure records of the path of fire.

And thus before his eighteenth year was told,  
Accumulated feelings pressed his heart  
With still increasing weight ; he was o'erpowered  
By Nature ; by the turbulence subdued  
Of his own mind ; by mystery and hope,  
And the first virgin passion of a soul  
Communing with the glorious universe,  
Full often wished he that the winds might rage  
When they were silent : far more fondly now  
Than in his earlier season did he love  
Tempestuous nights—the conflict and the sounds  
That live in darkness. From his intellect  
And from the stillness of abstracted thought  
He asked repose ; and, failing oft to win  
The peace required, he scanned the laws of light  
Amid the roar of torrents, where they send  
From hollow clefts up to the clearer air  
A cloud of mist that, smitten by the sun,  
Varies its rainbow hues. But vainly thus,  
And vainly by all other means, he strove  
To mitigate the fever of his heart.

In dreams, in study, and in ardent thought,  
Thus was he reared ; much wanting to assist  
The growth of intellect, yet gaining more,  
And every moral feeling of his soul  
Strengthened and braced, by breathing in content  
The keen, the wholesome, air of poverty,  
And drinking from the well of homely life.  
—But, from past liberty, and tried restraints,  
He now was summoned to select the course  
Of humble industry that promised best  
To yield him no unworthy maintenance.  
Urged by his Mother, he essayed to teach  
A village-school—but wandering thoughts were then  
A misery to him ; and the Youth resigned  
A task he was unable to perform.

That stern yet kindly Spirit, who constrains  
The Savoyard to quit his naked rocks,

The free-born Swiss to leave his narrow vales,  
(Spirit attached to regions mountainous  
Like their own stedfast clouds) did now impel  
His restless mind to look abroad with hope.  
—An irksome drudgery seems it to plod on,  
Through hot and dusty ways, or pelting storm,  
A vagrant Merchant under a heavy load,  
Bent as he moves, and needing frequent rest ;  
Yet do such travellers find their own delight ;  
And their hard service, deemed debasing now  
Gained merited respect in simpler times ;  
When squire, and priest, and they who round them dwelt  
In rustic sequestration—all dependent  
Upon the PEDLAR's toil—supplied their wants,  
Or pleased their fancies, with the wares he brought.  
Not ignorant was the Youth that still no few  
Of his adventurous countrymen were led  
By perseverance in this track of life  
To competence and ease :—to him it offered  
Attractions manifold ;—and this he chose.  
—His Parents on the enterprise bestowed  
Their farewell benediction, but with hearts  
Foreboding evil. From his native hills  
He wandered far ; much did he see of men,  
Their manners, their enjoyments, and pursuits,  
Their passions and their feelings ; chiefly those  
Essential and eternal in the heart,  
That, 'mid the simpler forms of rural life,  
Exist more simple in their elements,  
And speak a plainer language. In the woods,  
A lone Enthusiast, and among the fields,  
Itinerant in this labour, he had passed  
The better portion of his time ; and there  
Spontaneously had his affections thriven  
Amid the bounties of the year, the peace  
And liberty of nature ; there he kept  
In solitude and solitary thought  
His mind in a just equipoise of love.  
Serene it was, unclouded by the cares  
Of ordinary life ; unvexed, unwarped  
By partial bondage. In his steady course,  
No piteous revolutions had he felt,  
No wild varieties of joy and grief.  
Unoccupied by sorrow of its own,  
His heart lay open ; and, by nature tuned

And constant disposition of his thoughts  
 To sympathy with man, he was alive  
 To all that was enjoyed where'er he went,  
 And all that was endured ; for, in himself  
 Happy, and quiet in his cheerfulness,  
 He had no painful pressure from without  
 That made him turn aside from wretchedness  
 With coward fears. He could *afford* to suffer  
 With those whom he saw suffer. Hence it came  
 That in our best experience he was rich,  
 And in the wisdom of our daily life.  
 For hence, minutely, in his various rounds,  
 He had observed the progress and decay  
 Of many minds, of minds and bodies too ;  
 The history of many families ;  
 How they had prospered ; how they were o'erthrown  
 By passion or mischance, or such misrule  
 Among the unthinking masters of the earth  
 As makes the nations groan.

This active course

He followed till provision for his wants  
 Had been obtained ;—the Wanderer then resolved  
 To pass the remnant of his days, untasked  
 With needless services, from hardship free.  
 His calling laid aside, he lived at ease :  
 But still he loved to pace the public roads  
 And the wild paths ; and, by the summer's warmth  
 Invited, often would he leave his home  
 And journey far, revisiting the scenes  
 That to his memory were most endeared.  
 —Vigorous in health, of hopeful spirits, undamped  
 By worldly-mindedness or anxious care ;  
 Observant, studious, thoughtful, and refreshed  
 By knowledge gathered up from day to day ;  
 Thus had he lived a long and innocent life.

The Scottish Church, both on himself and those  
 With whom from childhood he grew up, had held  
 The strong hand of her purity ; and still  
 Had watched him with an unrelenting eye.  
 This he remembered in his riper age  
 With gratitude, and reverential thoughts.  
 But by the native vigour of his mind,  
 By his habitual wanderings out of doors,  
 By loneliness, and goodness, and kind works,

Whate'er, in docile childhood or in youth,  
He had imbibed of fear or darker thought  
Was melted all away ; so true was this,  
That sometimes his religion seemed to me  
Self-taught, as of a dreamer in the woods ;  
Who to the model of his own pure heart  
Shaped his belief, as grace divine inspired,  
And human reason dictated with awe.  
—And surely never did there live on earth  
A man of kindlier nature. The rough sports  
And teasing ways of children vexed not him ;  
Indulgent listener was he to the tongue  
Of garrulous age ; nor did the sick man's tale,  
To his fraternal sympathy addressed,  
Obtain reluctant hearing.

Plain his garb ;  
Such as might suit a rustic Sire, prepared  
For sabbath duties ; yet he was a man  
Whom no one could have passed without remark.  
Active and nervous was his gait ; his limbs  
And his whole figure breathed intelligence.  
Time had compressed the freshness of his cheek  
Into a narrower circle of deep red,  
But had not tamed his eye ; that, under brows  
Shaggy and grey, had meanings which it brought  
From years of youth ; which, like a Being made  
Of many Beings, he had wondrous skill  
To blend with knowledge of the years to come,  
Human, or such as lie beyond the grave.

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So was He framed ; and such his course of life  
Who now, with no appendage but a staff,  
The prized memorial of relinquished toils,  
Upon that cottage-bench reposed his limbs,  
Screened from the sun. Supine the Wanderer lay,  
His eyes as if in drowsiness half shut,  
The shadows of the breezy elms above  
Dappling his face. He had not heard the sound  
Of my approaching steps, and in the shade  
Unnoticed did I stand some minutes' space.  
At length I hailed him, seeing that his hat  
Was moist with water-drops, as if the brim  
Had newly scooped a running stream. He rose,  
And ere our lively greeting into peace

Had settled, "'Tis," said I, "a burning day:  
My lips are parched with thirst, but you, it seems,  
Have somewhere found relief." He, at the word,  
Pointing towards a sweet-briar, bade me climb  
The fence where that aspiring shrub looked out  
Upon the public way. It was a plot  
Of garden ground run wild, its matted weeds  
Marked with the steps of those, whom, as they passed,  
The gooseberry trees that shot in long lank slips,  
Or currants, hanging from their leafless stems,  
In scanty strings, had tempted to o'erleap  
The broken wall. I looked around, and there,  
Where two tall hedge-rows of thick alder boughs  
Joined in a cold damp nook, espied a well  
Shrouded with willow-flowers and plummy fern.  
My thirst I slaked, and, from the cheerless spot  
Withdrawing, straightway to the shade returned  
Where sate the old Man on the cottage-bench;  
And, while, beside him, with uncovered head,  
I yet was standing, freely to respire,  
And cool my temples in the fanning air,  
Thus did he speak. "I see around me here  
Things which you cannot see: we die, my Friend,  
Nor we alone, but that which each man loved  
And prized in his peculiar nook of earth  
Dies with him, or is changed; and very soon  
Even of the good is no memorial left.  
—The Poets, in their elegies and songs  
Lamenting the departed, call the groves,  
They call upon the hills and streams, to mourn,  
And senseless rocks; nor idly; for they speak,  
In these their invocations, with a voice  
Obedient to the strong creative power  
Of human passion. Sympathies there are  
More tranquil, yet perhaps of kindred birth,  
That steal upon the meditative mind,  
And grow with thought. Beside yon spring I stood,  
And eyed its waters till we seemed to feel  
One sadness, they and I. For them a bond  
Of brotherhood is broken: time has been  
When, every day, the touch of human hand  
Dislodged the natural sleep that binds them up  
In mortal stillness; and they ministered  
To human comfort. Stooping down to drink,  
Upon the slimy foot-stone I espied

The useless fragment of a wooden bowl,  
Green with the moss of years, and subject only  
To the soft handling of the elements :  
There let it lie—how foolish are such thoughts !  
Forgive them ;—never—never did my steps  
Approach this door but she who dwelt within  
A daughter's welcome gave me, and I loved her  
As my own child. Oh, Sir ! the good die first,  
And they whose hearts are dry as summer dust  
Burn to the socket. Many a passenger  
Hath blessed poor Margaret for her gentle looks,  
When she upheld the cool refreshment drawn  
From that forsaken spring ; and no one came  
But he was welcome ; no one went away  
But that it seemed she loved him. She is dead,  
The light extinguished of her lonely hut,  
The hut itself abandoned to decay,  
And she forgotten in the quiet grave.

I speak," continued he, " of One whose stock  
Of virtues bloomed beneath this lonely roof.  
She was a Woman of a steady mind,  
Tender and deep in her excess of love ;  
Not speaking much, pleased rather with the joy  
Of her own thoughts : by some especial care  
Her temper had been framed, as if to make  
A Being, who by adding love to peace  
Might live on earth a life of happiness.  
Her wedded Partner lacked not on his side  
The humble worth that satisfied her heart :  
Frugal, affectionate, sober, and withal  
Keenly industrious. She with pride would tell  
That he was often seated at his loom,  
In summer, ere the mower was abroad  
Among the dewy grass,—in early spring,  
Ere the last star had vanished.—They who passed  
At evening, from behind the garden fence  
Might hear his busy spade, which he would ply,  
After his daily work, until the light  
Had failed, and every leaf and flower were lost  
In the dark hedges. So their days were spent  
In peace and comfort ; and a pretty boy  
Was their best hope, next to the God in heaven.

Not twenty years ago, but you I think  
Can scarcely bear it now in mind, there came

Two blighting seasons, when the fields were left  
With half a harvest. It pleased Heaven to add  
A worse affliction in the plague of war :  
This happy Land was stricken to the heart !  
A Wanderer then among the cottages,  
I, with my freight of winter raiment, saw  
The hardships of that season : many rich  
Sank down, as in a dream, among the poor ;  
And of the poor did many cease to be,  
And their place knew them not. Meanwhile, abridged  
Of daily comforts, gladly reconciled  
To numerous self-denials, Margaret  
Went struggling on through those calamitous years  
With cheerful hope, until the second autumn,  
When her life's Helpmate on a sick-bed lay,  
Smitten with perilous fever. In disease  
He lingered long ; and, when his strength returned,  
He found the little he had stored, to meet  
The hour of accident or crippling age,  
Was all consumed. A second infant now  
Was added to the troubles of a time  
Laden, for them and all of their degree,  
With care and sorrow ; shoals of artisans  
From ill-requited labour turned adrift  
Sought daily bread from public charity,  
They, and their wives and children—happier far  
Could they have lived as do the little birds  
That peck along the hedge-rows, or the kite  
That makes her dwelling on the mountain rocks !

A sad reverse it was for him who long  
Had filled with plenty, and possessed in peace,  
This lonely Cottage. At the door he stood,  
And whistled many a snatch of merry tunes  
That had no mirth in them ; or with his knife  
Carved uncouth figures on the heads of sticks—  
Then, not less idly, sought, through every nook  
In house or garden, any casual work  
Of use or ornament ; and with a strange,  
Amusing, yet uneasy, novelty,  
He mingled, where he might, the various tasks  
Of summer, autumn, winter, and of spring.  
But this endured not ; his good humour soon  
Became a weight in which no pleasure was ;  
And poverty brought on a petted mood

And a sore temper : day by day he drooped,  
And he would leave his work—and to the town  
Would turn without an errand his slack steps ;  
Or wander here and there among the fields.  
One while he would speak lightly of his babes,  
And with a cruel tongue : at other times  
He tossed them with a false unnatural joy :  
And 'twas a rueful thing to see the looks  
Of the poor innocent children. ' Every smile,'  
Said Margaret to me, here beneath these trees,  
' Made my heart bleed.' "

At this the Wanderer paused ;

And, looking up to those enormous elms,  
He said, "'Tis now the hour of deepest noon.  
At this still season of repose and peace,  
This hour when all things which are not at rest  
Are cheerful ; while this multitude of flies  
With tuneful hum is filling all the air ;  
Why should a tear be on an old Man's cheek ?  
Why should we thus, with an untoward mind,  
And in the weakness of humanity,  
From natural wisdom turn our hearts away ;  
To natural comfort shut our eyes and ears ;  
And, feeding on disquiet, thus disturb  
The calm of nature with our restless thoughts ? "

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He spake with somewhat of a solemn tone :  
But, when he ended, there was in his face  
Such easy cheerfulness, a look so mild,  
That for a little time it stole away  
All recollection ; and that simple tale  
Passed from my mind like a forgotten sound.  
A while on trivial things we held discourse,  
To me soon tasteless. In my own despite,  
I thought of that poor Woman as of one  
Whom I had known and loved. He had rehearsed  
Her homely tale with such familiar power,  
With such an active countenance, an eye  
So busy, that the things of which he spake  
Seemed present ; and, attention now relaxed,  
A heart-felt chillness crept along my veins.  
I rose ; and, having left the breezy shade,  
Stood drinking comfort from the warmer sun,  
That had not cheered me long—ere, looking round

Upon that tranquil Ruin, I returned,  
And begged of the old Man that, for my sake,  
He would resume his story.

He replied,  
" It were a wantonness, and would demand  
Severe reproof, if we were men whose hearts  
Could hold vain dalliance with the misery  
Even of the dead ; contented thence to draw  
A momentary pleasure, never marked  
By reason, barren of all future good.  
But we have known that there is often found  
In mournful thoughts, and always might be found,  
A power to virtue friendly ; were't not so,  
I am a dreamer among men, indeed  
An idle dreamer ! 'Tis a common tale,  
An ordinary sorrow of man's life,  
A tale of silent suffering, hardly clothed  
In bodily form.—But without further bidding  
I will proceed.

While thus it fared with them,  
To whom this cottage, till those hapless years,  
Had been a blessèd home, it was my chance  
To travel in a country far remote ;  
And when these lofty elms once more appeared  
What pleasant expectations lured me on  
O'er the flat Common !—With quick step I reached  
The threshold, lifted with light hand the latch ;  
But, when I entered, Margaret looked at me  
A little while ; then turned her head away  
Speechless,—and, sitting down upon a chair,  
Wept bitterly. I wist not what to do,  
Nor how to speak to her. Poor Wretch ! at last  
She rose from off her seat, and then,—O Sir !  
I cannot *tell* how she pronounced my name :—  
With fervent love, and with a face of grief  
Unutterably helpless, and a look  
That seemed to cling upon me, she enquired  
If I had seen her husband. As she spake  
A strange surprise and fear came to my heart,  
Nor had I power to answer ere she told  
That he had disappeared—not two months gone.  
He left his house : two wretched days had past,  
And on the third, as wistfully she raised  
Her head from off her pillow, to look forth,

Like one in trouble, for returning light,  
Within her chamber-casement she espied  
A folded paper, lying as if placed  
To meet her waking eyes. This tremblingly  
She opened—found no writing, but beheld  
Pieces of money carefully enclosed,  
Silver and gold. 'I shuddered at the sight,'  
Said Margaret, 'for I knew it was his hand  
That must have placed it there; and ere that day  
Was ended, that long anxious day, I learned,  
From one who by my husband had been sent  
With the sad news, that he had joined a troop  
Of soldiers, going to a distant land.  
—He left me thus—he could not gather heart  
To take a farewell of me; for he feared  
That I should follow with my babes, and sink  
Beneath the misery of that wandering life.'

This tale did Margaret tell with many tears :  
And, when she ended, I had little power  
To give her comfort, and was glad to take  
Such words of hope from her own mouth as served  
To cheer us both. But long we had not talked  
Ere we built up a pile of better thoughts,  
And with a brighter eye she looked around  
As if she had been shedding tears of joy.  
We parted.—'Twas the time of early spring;  
I left her busy with her garden tools;  
And well remember, o'er that fence she looked,  
And, while I paced along the foot-way path,  
Called out, and sent a blessing after me,  
With tender cheerfulness, and with a voice  
That seemed the very sound of happy thoughts.

I roved o'er many a hill and many a dale,  
With my accustomed load; in heat and cold,  
Through many a wood and many an open ground,  
In sunshine and in shade, in wet and fair,  
Drooping or blithe of heart, as might befall;  
My best companions now the driving winds,  
And now the 'trotting brooks' and whispering trees,  
And now the music of my own sad steps,  
With many a short-lived thought that passed between,  
And disappeared.

I journeyed back this way,  
When, in the warmth of midsummer, the wheat

Was yellow ; and the soft and bladed grass,  
Springing afresh, had o'er the hay-field spread  
Its tender verdure. At the door arrived,  
I found that she was absent. In the shade,  
Where now we sit, I waited her return.  
Her cottage, then a cheerful object, wore  
Its customary look,—only, it seemed,  
The honeysuckle, crowding round the porch,  
Hung down in heavier tufts ; and that bright weed,  
The yellow stone-crop, suffered to take root  
Along the window's edge, profusely grew,  
Blinding the lower panes. I turned aside,  
And strolled into her garden. It appeared  
To lag behind the season, and had lost  
Its pride of neatness. Daisy-flowers and thrift  
Had broken their trim border-lines, and straggled  
O'er paths they used to deck : carnations, once  
Prized for surpassing beauty, and no-less  
For the peculiar pains they had required,  
Declined their languid heads, wanting support.  
The cumbrous bind-weed, with its wreaths and bells,  
Had twined about her two small rows of peas,  
And dragged them to the earth.

Ere this an hour

Was wasted.—Back I turned my restless steps ;  
A stranger passed ; and, guessing whom I sought,  
He said that she was used to ramble far.—  
The sun was sinking in the west ; and now  
I sate with sad impatience. From within  
Her solitary infant cried aloud ;  
Then, like a blast that dies away self-stilled,  
The voice was silent. From the bench I rose ;  
But neither could divert nor soothe my thoughts.  
The spot, though fair, was very desolate—  
The longer I remained, more desolate :  
And, looking round me, now I first observed  
The corner stones, on either side the porch,  
With dull red stains discoloured, and stuck o'er  
With tufts and hairs of wool, as if the sheep,  
That fed upon the Common, thither came  
Familiarly, and found a couching-place  
Even at her threshold. Deeper shadows fell  
From these tall elms ; the cottage-clock struck eight ;—  
I turned, and saw her distant a few steps.  
Her face was pale and thin—her figure, too,

Was changed. As she unlocked the door, she said,  
'It grieves me you have waited here so long,  
But, in good truth, I've wandered much of late ;  
And sometimes—to my shame I speak—have need  
Of my best prayers to bring me back again.'  
While on the board she spread our evening meal,  
She told me—interrupting not the work  
Which gave employment to her listless hands—  
That she had parted with her elder child ;  
To a kind master on a distant farm  
Now happily apprenticed.—'I perceive  
You look at me, and you have cause ; to-day  
I have been travelling far ; and many days  
About the fields I wander, knowing this  
Only, that what I seek I cannot find ;  
And so I waste my time : for I am changed ;  
And to myself,' said she, 'have done much wrong  
And to this helpless infant. I have slept  
Weeping, and weeping have I waked ; my tears  
Have flowed as if my body were not such  
As others are ; and I could never die.  
But I am now in mind and in my heart  
More easy ; and I hope,' said she, 'that God  
Will give me patience to endure the things  
Which I behold at home.'

It would have grieved  
Your very soul to see her. Sir, I feel  
The story linger in my heart ; I fear  
'Tis long and tedious ; but my spirit clings  
To that poor Woman :—so familiarly  
Do I perceive her manner, and her look,  
And presence ; and so deeply do I feel  
Her goodness, that, not seldom, in my walks  
A momentary trance comes over me ;  
And to myself I seem to muse on One  
By sorrow laid asleep ; or borne away,  
A human being destined to awake  
To human life, or something very near  
To human life, when he shall come again  
For whom she suffered. Yes, it would have grieved  
Your very soul to see her : evermore  
Her eyelids drooped, her eyes downward were cast ;  
And, when she at her table gave me food,  
She did not look at me. Her voice was low,  
Her body was subdued. In every act

Pertaining to her house-affairs, appeared  
 The careless stillness of a thinking mind  
 Self-occupied ; to which all outward things  
 Are like an idle matter. Still she sighed,  
 But yet no motion of the breast was seen,  
 No heaving of the heart. While by the fire  
 We sate together, sighs came on my ear,  
 I knew not how, and hardly whence they came.

Ere my departure, to her care I gave,  
 For her son's use, some tokens of regard,  
 Which with a look of welcome she received ;  
 And I exhorted her to place her trust  
 In God's good love, and seek his help by prayer.  
 I took my staff, and, when I kissed her babe,  
 The tears stood in her eyes. I left her then  
 With the best hope and comfort I could give :  
 She thanked me for my wish ;—but for my hope  
 It seemed she did not thank me.

I returned,  
 And took my rounds along this road again  
 When on its sunny bank the primrose flower  
 Peeped forth, to give an earnest of the Spring.  
 I found her sad and drooping : she had learned  
 No tidings of her husband ; if he lived,  
 She knew not that he lived ; if he were dead,  
 She knew not he was dead. She seemed the same  
 In person and appearance ; but her house  
 Bespoke a sleepy hand of negligence ;  
 The floor was neither dry nor neat, the hearth  
 Was comfortless, and her small lot of books,  
 Which, in the cottage-window, heretofore  
 Had been piled up against the corner panes  
 In seemly order, now, with straggling leaves  
 Lay scattered here and there, open or shut,  
 As they had chanced to fall. Her infant Babe  
 Had from his Mother caught the trick of grief,  
 And sighed among its playthings. I withdrew,  
 And once again entering the garden saw,  
 More plainly still, that poverty and grief  
 Were now come nearer to her : weeds defaced  
 The hardened soil, and knots of withered grass :  
 No ridges there appeared of clear black mould,  
 No winter greenness ; of her herbs and flowers,  
 It seemed the better part was gnawed away

Or trampled into earth ; a chain of straw,  
Which had been twined about the slender stem  
Of a young apple-tree, lay at its root ;  
The bark was nibbled round by truant sheep.  
—Margaret stood near, her infant in her arms,  
And, noting that my eye was on the tree,  
She said, ‘ I fear it will be dead and gone  
Ere Robert come again.’ When to the House  
We had returned together, she enquired  
If I had any hope :—but for her babe  
And for her little orphan boy, she said,  
She had no wish to live, that she must die  
Of sorrow. Yet I saw the idle loom  
Still in its place ; his Sunday garments hung  
Upon the self-same nail ; his very staff  
Stood undisturbed behind the door.

And when,

In bleak December, I retraced this way,  
She told me that her little babe was dead,  
And she was left alone. She now, released  
From her maternal cares, had taken up  
The employment common through these wilds, and gained,  
By spinning hemp, a pittance for herself ;  
And for this end had hired a neighbour's boy  
To give her needful help. That very time  
Most willingly she put her work aside,  
And walked with me along the miry road,  
Heedless how far ; and, in such piteous sort  
That any heart had ached to hear her, begged  
That, wheresoe'er I went, I still would ask  
For him whom she had lost. We parted then—  
Our final parting ; for from that time forth  
Did many seasons pass ere I returned  
Into this tract again.

Nine tedious years ;  
From their first separation, nine long years,  
She lingered in unquiet widowhood ;  
A Wife and Widow. Needs must it have been  
A sore heart-wasting ! I have heard, my Friend,  
That in yon arbour oftentimes she sate  
Alone, through half the vacant sabbath day ;  
And, if a dog passed by, she still would quit  
The shade, and look abroad. On this old bench  
For hours she sate ; and evermore her eye  
Was busy in the distance, shaping things

That made her heart beat quick. You see that path,  
Now faint,—the grass has crept o'er its grey line ;  
There, to and fro, she paced through many a day  
Of the warm summer, from a belt of hemp  
That girt her waist, spinning the long-drawn thread  
With backward steps. Yet ever as there passed  
A man whose garments showed the soldier's red,  
Or crippled mendicant in sailor's garb,  
The little child who sate to turn the wheel  
Ceased from his task ; and she with faltering voice  
Made many a fond enquiry ; and when they,  
Whose presence gave no comfort, were gone by,  
Her heart was still more sad. And by yon gate,  
That bars the traveller's road, she often stood,  
And when a stranger horseman came, the latch  
Would lift, and in his face look wistfully ;  
Most happy, if, from aught discovered there  
Of tender feeling, she might dare repeat  
The same sad question. Meanwhile her poor Hut  
Sank to decay ; for he was gone, whose hand,  
At the first nipping of October frost,  
Closed up each chink, and with fresh bands of straw  
Chequered the green-grown thatch. And so she lived  
Through the long winter, reckless and alone ;  
Until her house by frost, and thaw, and rain,  
Was sapped ; and while she slept, the nightly damps  
Did chill her breast ; and in the stormy day  
Her tattered clothes were ruffled by the wind,  
Even at the side of her own fire. Yet still  
She loved this wretched spot, nor would for worlds  
Have parted hence ; and still that length of road,  
And this rude bench, one torturing hope endeared,  
Fast rooted at her heart : and here, my Friend,—  
In sickness she remained ; and here she died ;  
Last human tenant of these ruined walls ! ”

The old Man ceased : he saw that I was moved ;  
From that low bench, rising instinctively  
I turned aside in weakness, nor had power  
To thank him for the tale which he had told.  
I stood, and leaning o'er the garden wall  
Reviewed that Woman's sufferings ; and it seemed  
To comfort me while with a brother's love  
I blessed her in the impotence of grief.  
Then towards the cottage I returned ; and traced

Fondly, though with an interest more mild,  
That secret spirit of humanity  
Which, 'mid the calm oblivious tendencies  
Of nature, 'mid her plants, and weeds, and flowers,  
And silent overgrowings, still survived.  
The old Man, noting this, resumed, and said,  
"My Friend! enough to sorrow you have given,  
The purposes of wisdom ask no more:  
Nor more would she have craved as due to One  
Who, in her worst distress, had oftentimes felt  
The unbounded might of prayer; and learned, with soul  
Fixed on the Cross, that consolation springs,  
From sources deeper far than deepest pain,  
For the meek Sufferer. Why then should we read  
The forms of things with an unworthy eye?  
She sleeps in the calm earth, and peace is here.  
I well remember that those very plumes,  
Those weeds, and the high spear-grass on that wall,  
By mist and silent rain-drops silvered o'er,  
As once I passed, into my heart conveyed  
So still an image of tranquillity,  
So calm and still, and looked so beautiful  
Amid the uneasy thoughts which filled my mind,  
That what we feel of sorrow and despair  
From ruin and from change, and all the grief  
That passing shows of Being leave behind,  
Appeared an idle dream, that could maintain,  
Nowhere, dominion o'er the enlightened spirit  
Whose meditative sympathies repose  
Upon the breast of Faith. I turned away,  
And walked along my road in happiness."

He ceased. Ere long the sun declining shot  
A slant and mellow radiance, which began  
To fall upon us, while, beneath the trees,  
We sat on that low bench: and now we felt,  
Admonished thus, the sweet hour coming on.  
A linnet warbled from those lofty elms,  
A thrush sang loud, and other melodies,  
At distance heard, peopled the milder air.  
The old Man rose, and, with a sprightly mien  
Of hopeful preparation, grasped his staff;  
Together casting then a farewell look  
Upon those silent walls, we left the shade;  
And, ere the stars were visible, had reached  
A village-inn,—our evening resting-place.

## BOOK SECOND

## THE SOLITARY

## ARGUMENT

The Author describes his travels with the Wanderer, whose character is further illustrated—Morning scene, and View of a Village Wake—Wanderer's account of a Friend whom he purposes to visit—View, from an eminence, of the Valley which his Friend had chosen for his retreat—Sound of singing from below—A funeral procession—Descent into the Valley—Observations drawn from the Wanderer at sight of a book accidentally discovered in a recess in the Valley—Meeting with the Wanderer's friend, the Solitary—Wanderer's description of the mode of burial in this mountainous district—Solitary contrasts with this, that of the individual carried a few minutes before from the cottage—The cottage entered—Description of the Solitary's apartment—Requies there—View, from the window, of two mountain summits ; and the Solitary's description of the companionship they afford him—Account of the departed inmate of the cottage—Description of a grand spectacle upon the mountains, with its effect upon the Solitary's mind—Leave the house.

IN days of yore how fortunately fared  
 The Minstrel ! wandering on from hall to hall,  
 Baronial court or royal ; cheered with gifts  
 Munificent, and love, and ladies' praise ;  
 Now meeting on his road an armed knight,  
 Now resting with a pilgrim by the side  
 Of a clear brook ;—beneath an abbey's roof  
 One evening sumptuously lodged ; the next,  
 Humbly in a religious hospital ;  
 Or with some merry outlaws of the wood ;  
 Or haply shrouded in a hermit's cell.  
 Him, sleeping or awake, the robber spared ;  
 He walked—protected from the sword of war  
 By virtue of that sacred instrument  
 His harp, suspended at the traveller's side ;  
 His dear companion wheresoe'er he went  
 Opening from land to land an easy way  
 By melody, and by the charm of verse.  
 Yet not the noblest of that honoured Race  
 Drew happier, loftier, more empasioned, thoughts  
 From his long journeyings and eventful life,  
 Than this obscure Itinerant had skill  
 To gather, ranging through the tamer ground  
 Of these our unimaginative days ;  
 Both while he trod the earth in humblest guise  
 Accoutred with his burthen and his staff ;  
 And now, when free to move with lighter pace.

What wonder, then, if I, whose favourite school  
Hath been the fields, the roads, and rural lanes,  
Looked on this guide with reverential love ?  
Each with the other pleased, we now pursued  
Our journey, under favourable skies.  
Turn wheresoe'er we would, he was a light  
Unfailing : not a hamlet could we pass,  
Rarely a house, that did not yield to him  
Remembrances ; or from his tongue call forth  
Some way-beguiling tale. Nor less regard  
Accompanied those strains of apt discourse,  
Which nature's various objects might inspire ;  
And in the silence of his face I read  
His overflowing spirit. Birds and beasts,  
And the mute fish that glances in the stream,  
And harmless reptile coiling in the sun,  
And gorgeous insect hovering in the air,  
The fowl domestic, and the household dog--  
In his capacious mind, he loved them all :  
Their rights acknowledging he felt for all.  
Oft was occasion given me to perceive  
How the calm pleasures of the pasturing herd  
To happy contemplation soothed his walk ;  
How the poor brute's condition, forced to run  
Its course of suffering in the public road,  
Sad contrast ! all too often smote his heart  
With unavailing pity. Rich in love  
And sweet humanity, he was, himself,  
To the degree that he desired, beloved.  
Smiles of good-will from faces that he knew  
Greeted us all day long ; we took our seats  
By many a cottage-hearth, where he received  
The welcome of an Inmate from afar,  
And I at once forgot, I was a Stranger.  
—Nor was he loth to enter ragged huts,  
Huts where his charity was blest ; his voice  
Heard as the voice of an experienced friend.  
And, sometimes—where the poor man held dispute  
With his own mind, unable to subdue  
Impatience through inaptness to perceive  
General distress in his particular lot ;  
Or cherishing resentment, or in vain  
Struggling against it ; with a soul perplexed,  
And finding in herself no steady power  
To draw the line of comfort that divides

Calamity, the chastisement of Heaven,  
From the injustice of our brother men—  
To him appeal was made as to a judge ;  
Who, with an understanding heart, allayed  
The perturbation ; listened to the plea ;  
Resolved the dubious point ; and sentence gave  
So grounded, so applied, that it was heard  
With softened spirit, even when it condemned.

Such intercourse I witnessed, while we roved,  
Now as his choice directed, now as mine ;  
Or both, with equal readiness of will,  
Our course submitting to the changeful breeze  
Of accident. But when the rising sun  
Had three times called us to renew our walk,  
My Fellow-traveller, with earnest voice,  
As if the thought were but a moment old,  
Claimed absolute dominion for the day.  
We started—and he led me toward the hills,  
Up through an ample vale, with higher hills  
Before us, mountains stern and desolate ;  
But, in the majesty of distance, now  
Set off, and to our ken appearing fair  
Of aspect, with aerial softness clad,  
And beautified with morning's purple beams.

The wealthy, the luxurious, by the stress  
Of business roused, or pleasure, ere their time,  
May roll in chariots, or provoke the hoofs  
Of the fleet coursers they bestride, to raise  
From earth the dust of morning, slow to rise ;  
And they, if blest with health and hearts at ease,  
Shall lack not their enjoyment :—but how faint  
Compared with ours ! who, pacing side by side,  
Could, with an eye of leisure, look on all  
That we beheld ; and lend the listening sense  
To every grateful sound of earth and air ;  
Pausing at will—our spirits braced, our thoughts  
Pleasant as roses in the thickets blown,  
And pure as dew bathing their crimson leaves.

Mount slowly, sun ! that we may journey long,  
By this dark hill protected from thy beams !  
Such is the summer pilgrim's frequent wish ;  
But quickly from among our morning thoughts  
'Twas chased away : for, toward the western side

Of the broad vale, casting a casual glance,  
We saw a throng of people ; wherefore met ?  
Blithe notes of music, suddenly let loose  
On the thrilled ear, and flags uprising, yield  
Prompt answer ; they proclaim the annual Wake,  
Which the bright season favours.—Tabor and pipe  
In purpose join to hasten or reprove  
The laggard Rustic ; and repay with boons  
Of merriment a party-coloured knot,  
Already formed upon the village-green.  
—Beyond the limits of the shadow cast  
By the broad hill, glistened upon our sight  
That gay assemblage. Round them and above,  
Glitter, with dark recesses interposed,  
Casement, and cottage-roof, and stems of trees  
Half-veiled in vapoury cloud, the silver steam  
Of dews fast melting on their leafy boughs  
By the strong sunbeams smitten. Like a mast  
Of gold, the Maypole shines ; as if the rays  
Of morning, aided by exhaling dew,  
With gladsome influence could re-animate  
The faded garlands dangling from its sides.

Said I, " The music and the sprightly scene  
Invite us ; shall we quit our road, and join  
These festive matins ? "—He replied, " Not loth  
To linger I would here with you partake,  
Not one hour merely, but till evening's close,  
The simple pastimes of the day and place.  
By the fleet Racers, ere the sun be set,  
The turf of yon large pasture will be skimmed ;  
There, too, the lusty Wrestlers shall contend :  
But know we not that he, who intermits  
The appointed task and duties of the day,  
Untunes full oft the pleasures of the day ;  
Checking the finer spirits that refuse  
To flow when purposes are lightly changed ?  
A length of journey yet remains untraced :  
Let us proceed." Then, pointing with his staff  
Raised towards those craggy summits, his intent  
He thus imparted :—

" In a spot that lies  
Among yon mountain fastnesses concealed,  
You will receive, before the hour of noon,  
Good recompense, I hope, for this day's toil,

From sight of One who lives secluded there,  
Lonesome and lost : of whom, and whose past life,  
(Not to forestall such knowledge as may be  
More faithfully collected from himself)  
This brief communication shall suffice.

Though now sojourning there, he, like myself,  
Sprang from a stock of lowly parentage  
Among the wilds of Scotland, in a tract  
Where many a sheltered and well-tended plant,  
Bears, on the humblest ground of social life,  
Blossoms of piety and innocence.  
Such grateful promises his youth displayed :  
And, having shown in study forward zeal,  
He to the Ministry was duly called ;  
And straight, incited by a curious mind  
Filled with vague hopes, he undertook the charge  
Of Chaplain to a military troop  
Cheered by the Highland bagpipe, as they marched  
In plaided vest,—his fellow-countrymen.  
This office filling, yet by native power  
And force of native inclination made  
An intellectual ruler in the haunts  
Of social vanity, he walked the world,  
Gay, and affecting graceful gaiety ;  
Lax, buoyant—less a pastor with his flock  
Than a soldier among soldiers—lived and roamed  
Where Fortune led :—and Fortune, who oft proves  
The careless wanderer's friend, to him made known  
A blooming Lady—a conspicuous flower,  
Admired for beauty, for her sweetness praised ;  
Whom he had sensibility to love,  
Ambition to attempt, and skill to win.

For this fair Bride, most rich in gifts of mind,  
Nor sparingly endowed with worldly wealth,  
His office he relinquished ; and retired  
From the world's notice to a rural home.  
Youth's season yet with him was scarcely past,  
And she was in youth's prime. How free their love,  
How full their joy ! Till, pitiable doom !  
In the short course of one undreaded year  
Death blasted all. Death suddenly o'erthrew  
Two lovely Children—all that they possessed !  
The Mother followed :—miserably bare

The one Survivor stood ; he wept, he prayed  
 For his dismissal, day and night, compelled  
 To hold communion with the grave, and face  
 With pain the regions of eternity.  
 An uncomplaining apathy displaced  
 This anguish ; and, indifferent to delight,  
 To aim and purpose, he consumed his days,  
 To private interest dead, and public care.  
 So lived he ; so he might have died.

But now,

To the wide world's astonishment, appeared  
 A glorious opening, the unlooked-for dawn,  
 That promised everlasting joy to France !  
 Her voice of social transport reached even him !  
 He broke from his contracted bounds, repaired  
 To the great City, an emporium then  
 Of golden expectations, and receiving  
 Freights every day from a new world of hope.  
 Thither his popular talents he transferred ;  
 And, from the pulpit, zealously maintained  
 The cause of Christ and civil liberty,  
 As one, and moving to one glorious end.  
 Intoxicating service ! I might say  
 A happy service ; for he was sincere  
 As vanity and fondness for applause,  
 And new and shapeless wishes, would allow.

That righteous cause (such power hath freedom) bound,  
 For one hostility, in friendly league,  
 Ethereal natures and the worst of slaves ;  
 Was served by rival advocates that came  
 From regions opposite as heaven and hell.  
 One courage seemed to animate them all :  
 And, from the dazzling conquests daily gained  
 By their united efforts, there arose  
 A proud and most presumptuous confidence  
 In the transcendent wisdom of the age,  
 And her discernment ; not alone in rights,  
 And in the origin and bounds of power  
 Social and temporal ; but in laws divine,  
 Deduced by reason, or to faith revealed.  
 An overweening trust was raised ; and fear  
 Cast out, alike of person and of thing.  
 Plague from this union spread, whose subtle bane  
 The strongest did not easily escape ;

And He, what wonder I took a mortal taint.  
How shall I trace the change, how bear to tell  
That he broke faith with them whom he had laid  
In earth's dark chambers, with a Christian's hope !  
An infidel contempt of holy writ  
Stole by degrees upon his mind ; and hence  
Life, like that Roman Janus, double-faced ;  
Vilest hypocrisy—the laughing, gay  
Hypocrisy, not leagued with fear, but pride.  
Smooth words he had to wheedle simple souls ;  
But, for disciples of the inner school,  
Old freedom was old servitude, and they  
The wisest whose opinions stooped the least  
To known restraints ; and who most boldly drew  
Hopeful prognostications from a creed,  
That, in the light of false philosophy,  
Spread like a halo round a misty moon,  
Widening its circle as the storms advance.

His sacred function was at length renounced ;  
And every day and every place enjoyed  
The unshackled layman's natural liberty ;  
Speech, manners, morals, all without disguise.  
I do not wish to wrong him ; though the course  
Of private life licentiously displayed  
Unhallowed actions—planted like a crown  
Upon the insolent aspiring brow  
Of spurious notions—worn as open signs  
Of prejudice subdued—still he retained,  
'Mid much abasement, what he had received  
From nature, an intense and glowing mind.  
Wherefore, when humbled Liberty grew weak,  
And mortal sickness on her face appeared,  
He coloured objects to his own desire  
As with a lover's passion. Yet his moods  
Of pain were keen as those of better men,  
Nay keener, as his fortitude was less :  
And he continued, when worse days were come,  
To deal about his sparkling eloquence,  
Struggling against the strange reverse with zeal  
That showed like happiness. But, in despite  
Of all this outside bravery, within,  
He neither felt encouragement nor hope :  
For moral dignity, and strength of mind,  
Were wanting ; and simplicity of life ;

And reverence for himself; and, last and best,  
Confiding thoughts, through love and fear of Him  
Before whose sight the troubles of this world  
Are vain, as billows in a tossing sea.

The glory of the times fading away—  
The splendour, which had given a festal air  
To self-importance, hallowed it, and veiled  
From his own sight—this gone, he forfeited  
All joy in human nature; was consumed,  
And vexed, and chafed, by levity and scorn,  
And fruitless indignation; galled by pride;  
Made desperate by contempt of men who throve  
Before his sight in power or fame, and won,  
Without desert, what he desired; weak men,  
Too weak even for his envy or his hate!  
Tormented thus, after a wandering course  
Of discontent, and inwardly oppress  
With malady—in part, I fear, provoked  
By weariness of life—he fixed his home,  
Or, rather say, sate down by very chance,  
Among these rugged hills; where now he dwells,  
And wastes the sad remainder of his hours,  
Steeped in a self-indulging spleen, that wants not  
Its own voluptuousness;—on this resolved,  
With this content, that he will live and die  
Forgotten,—at safe distance from 'a world  
Not moving to his mind.'"

These serious words

Closed the preparatory notices  
That served my Fellow-traveller to beguile  
The way, while we advanced up that wide vale.  
Diverging now (as if his quest had been  
Some secret of the mountains, cavern, fall  
Of water, or some lofty eminence,  
Renowned for splendid prospect far and wide)  
We scaled, without a track to ease our steps,  
A steep ascent; and reached a dreary plain,  
With a tumultuous waste of huge hill tops  
Before us; savage region! which I paced  
Dispirited: when, all at once, behold!  
Beneath our feet, a little lowly vale,  
A lowly vale, and yet uplifted high  
Among the mountains; even as if the spot  
Had been from eldest time by wish of theirs

So placed, to be shut out from all the world !  
Urn-like it was in shape, deep as an urn ;  
With rocks encompassed, save that to the south  
Was one small opening, where a heath-clad ridge  
Supplied a boundary less abrupt and close ;  
A quiet treeless nook, with two green fields,  
A liquid pool that glittered in the sun,  
And one bare dwelling ; one abode, no more !  
It seemed the home of poverty and toil,  
Though not of want : the little fields, made green  
By husbandry of many thrifty years,  
Paid cheerful tribute to the moorland house.  
—There crows the cock, single in his domain :  
The small birds find in spring no thicket there  
To shroud them ; only from the neighbouring vales  
The cuckoo, straggling up to the hill tops,  
Shouteth faint tidings of some gladder place.

Ah ! what a sweet Recess, thought I, is here !  
Instantly throwing down my limbs at ease  
Upon a bed of heath ;—full many a spot  
Of hidden beauty have I chanced to spy  
Among the mountains ; never one like this ;  
So lonesome, and so perfectly secure ;  
Not melancholy—no, for it is green,  
And bright, and fertile, furnished in itself  
With the few needful things that life requires.  
—In rugged arms how softly does it lie,  
How tenderly protected ! Far and near  
We have an image of the pristine earth,  
The planet in its nakedness : were this  
Man's only dwelling, sole appointed seat,  
First, last, and single, in the breathing world,  
It could not be more quiet ; peace is here  
Or nowhere ; days unruffled by the gale  
Of public news or private ; years that pass  
Forgetfully ; uncalled upon to pay  
The common penalties of mortal life,  
Sickness, or accident, or grief, or pain.

On these and kindred thoughts intent I lay  
In silence musing by my Comrade's side,  
He also silent ; when from out the heart  
Of that profound abyss a solemn voice,  
Or several voices in one solemn sound,  
Was heard ascending ; mournful, deep, and slow

The cadence, as of psalms—a funeral dirge !  
We listened, looking down upon the hut,  
But seeing no one : meanwhile from below  
The strain continued, spiritual as before ;  
And now distinctly could I recognise  
These words :—“ *Shall in the grave thy love be known,  
In death thy faithfulness ?* ”—“ God rest his soul ! ”  
Said the old man, abruptly breaking silence,—  
“ He is departed, and finds peace at last ! ”

This scarcely spoken, and those holy strains  
Not ceasing, forth appeared in view a band  
Of rustic persons, from behind the hut  
Bearing a coffin in the midst, with which  
They shaped their course along the sloping side  
Of that small valley, singing as they moved ;  
A sober company and few, the men  
Bare-headed, and all decently attired !  
Some steps when they had thus advanced, the dirge  
Ended ; and, from the stillness that ensued  
Recovering, to my Friend I said, “ You spake,  
Methought, with apprehension that these rites  
Are paid to Him upon whose shy retreat  
This day we purposed to intrude.”—“ I did so,  
But let us hence, that we may learn the truth :  
Perhaps it is not he but some one else  
For whom this pious service is performed ;  
Some other tenant of the solitude.”

So, to a steep and difficult descent  
Trusting ourselves, we wound from crag to crag  
Where passage could be won ; and, as the last  
Of the mute train, behind the heathy top  
Of that off-sloping outlet, disappeared,  
I, more impatient in my downward course,  
Had landed upon easy ground ; and there  
Stood waiting for my Comrade. When behold  
An object that enticed my steps aside !  
A narrow, winding, entry opened out  
Into a platform—that lay, sheepfold-wise,  
Enclosed between an upright mass of rock  
And one old moss-grown wall ;—a cool recess  
And fanciful ! For where the rock and wall  
Met in an angle, hung a penthouse, framed  
By thrusting two rude staves into the wall  
And overlaying them with mountain sods ;

To weather-fend a little turf-built seat  
Whereon a full-grown man might rest, nor dread  
The burning sunshine, or a transient shower ;  
But the whole plainly wrought by children's hands !  
Whose skill had thronged the floor with a proud show  
Of baby-houses, curiously arranged ;  
Nor wanting ornament of walks between,  
With mimic trees inserted in the turf,  
And gardens interposed. Pleased with the sight,  
I could not choose but beckon to my Guide,  
Who, entering, round him threw a careless glance,  
Impatient to pass on, when I exclaimed,  
" Lo ! what is here ? " and, stooping down, drew forth  
A book, that, in the midst of stones and moss  
And wreck of party-coloured earthen-ware,  
Aptly disposed, had lent its help to raise  
One of those petty structures. " His it must be ! "  
Exclaimed the Wanderer, " cannot but be his,  
And he is gone ! " The book, which in my hand  
Had opened of itself (for it was swoln  
With searching damp, and seemingly had lain  
To the injurious elements exposed  
From week to week,) I found to be a work  
In the French tongue, a Novel of Voltaire,  
His famous Optimist. " Unhappy Man ! "  
Exclaimed my Friend : " here then has been to him  
Retreat within retreat, a sheltering-place  
Within how deep a shelter ! He had fits,  
Even to the last, of genuine tenderness,  
And loved the haunts of children : here, no doubt,  
Pleasing and pleased, he shared their simple sports,  
Or sate companionless ; and here the book,  
Left and forgotten in his careless way,  
Must by the cottage-children have been found :  
Heaven bless them, and their inconsiderate work !  
To what odd purpose have the darlings turned  
This sad memorial of their hapless friend ! "

" Me," said I, " most doth it surprise, to find  
Such book in such a place ! "—" A book it is,"  
He answered, " to the Person suited well,  
Though little suited to surrounding things :  
'Tis strange, I grant ; and stranger still had been  
To see the Man who owned it, dwelling here,  
With one poor shepherd, far from all the world !—

Now, if our errand hath been thrown away,  
As from these intimations I forebode,  
Grieved shall I be—less for my sake than yours,  
And least of all for him who is no more."

By this, the book was in the old Man's hand ;  
And he continued, glancing on the leaves  
An eye of scorn :—"The lover," said he, "doomed  
To love when hope hath failed him—whom no depth  
Of privacy is deep enough to hide,  
Hath yet his bracelet or his lock of hair,  
And that is joy to him. When change of times  
Hath summoned kings to scaffolds, do but give  
The faithful servant, who must hide his head  
Henceforth in whatsoever nook he may,  
A kerchief sprinkled with his master's blood,  
And he too hath his comforter. How poor,  
Beyond all poverty how destitute,  
Must that Man have been left, who, hither driven,  
Flying or seeking, could yet bring with him  
No dearer relique, and no better stay,  
Than this dull product of a scoffer's pen,  
Impure conceits discharging from a heart  
Hardened by impious pride !—I did not fear  
To tax you with this journey ;"—mildly said  
My venerable Friend, as forth we stepped  
Into the presence of the cheerful light—  
"For I have knowledge that you do not shrink  
From moving spectacles ;—but let us on."

So speaking, on he went, and at the word  
I followed, till he made a sudden stand :  
For full in view, approaching through a gate  
That opened from the enclosure of green fields  
Into the rough uncultivated ground,  
Behold the Man whom he had fancied dead !  
I knew from his deportment, mien, and dress,  
That it could be no other ; a pale face,  
A meagre person, tall, and in a garb  
Not rustic—dull and faded like himself !  
He saw us not, though distant but few steps ;  
For he was busy, dealing, from a store  
Upon a broad leaf carried, choicest strings  
Of red ripe currants ; gift by which he strove,  
With intermixture of endearing words,  
To soothe a Child, who walked beside him, weeping

As if disconsolate.—“They to the grave  
Are bearing him, my Little-one,” he said,  
“To the dark pit ; but he will feel no pain ;  
His body is at rest, his soul in heaven.”

More might have followed—but my honoured Friend  
Broke in upon the Speaker with a frank  
And cordial greeting.—Vivid was the light  
That flashed and sparkled from the other's eyes ;  
He was all fire : no shadow on his brow  
Remained, nor sign of sickness on his face.  
Hands joined he with his Visitant,—a grasp,  
An eager grasp ; and many moments' space—  
When the first glow of pleasure was no more,  
And, of the sad appearance which at once  
Had vanished, much was come and coming back—  
An amicable smile retained the life  
Which it had unexpectedly received,  
Upon his hollow cheek. “How kind,” he said,  
“Nor could your coming have been better timed ;  
For this, you see, is in our narrow world  
A day of sorrow. I have here a charge”—  
And, speaking thus, he patted tenderly  
The sun-burnt forehead of the weeping child—  
“A little mourner, whom it is my task  
To comfort ;—but how came ye ?—if yon track  
(Which doth at once befriend us and betray)  
Conducted hither your most welcome feet,  
Ye could not miss the funeral train—they yet  
Have scarcely disappeared.” “This blooming Child,”  
Said the old Man, “is of an age to weep  
At any grave or solemn spectacle,  
Inly distressed or overpowered with awe,  
He knows not wherefore ;—but the boy to-day,  
Perhaps is shedding orphan's tears ; you also  
Must have sustained a loss.”—“The hand of Death,”  
He answered, “has been here ; but could not well  
Have fallen more lightly, if it had not fallen  
Upon myself.”—The other left these words  
Unnoticed, thus continuing—

“From yon crag,  
Down whose steep sides we dropped into the vale,  
We heard the hymn they sang—a solemn sound  
Heard anywhere ; but in a place like this  
'Tis more than human ! Many precious rites

And customs of our rural ancestry  
Are gone, or stealing from us ; this, I hope,  
Will last for ever. Oft on my way have I  
Stood still, though but a casual passenger,  
So much I felt the awfulness of life,  
In that one moment when the corse is lifted  
In silence, with a hush of decency ;  
Then from the threshold moves with song of peace,  
And confidential yearnings, towards its home,  
Its final home on earth. What traveller—who—  
(How far soe'er a stranger) does not own  
The bond of brotherhood, when he sees them go,  
A mute procession on the houseless road ;  
Or passing by some single tenement  
Or clustered dwellings, where again they raise  
The monitory voice ? But most of all  
It touches, it confirms, and elevates,  
Then, when the body, soon to be consigned  
Ashes to ashes, dust bequeathed to dust,  
Is raised from the church-aisle, and forward borne  
Upon the shoulders of the next in love,  
The nearest in affection or in blood ;  
Yea, by the very mourners who had knelt  
Beside the coffin, resting on its lid  
In silent grief their unuplifted heads,  
And heard meanwhile the Psalmist's mournful plaint,  
And that most awful scripture which declares  
We shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed !  
—Have I not seen—ye likewise may have seen—  
Son, husband, brothers—brothers side by side,  
And son and father also side by side,  
Rise from that posture :—and in concert move,  
On the green turf following the vested Priest,  
Four dear supporters of one senseless weight,  
From which they do not shrink, and under which  
They faint not, but advance towards the open grave  
Step after step—together, with their firm  
Unhidden faces : he that suffers most,  
He outwardly, and inwardly perhaps,  
The most serene, with most undaunted eye :—  
Oh ! blest are they who live and die like these,  
Loved with such love, and with such sorrow mourned !"

"That poor Man taken hence to-day," replied  
The Solitary, with a faint sarcastic smile

Which did not please me, "must be deemed, I fear,  
 Of the unblest ; for he will surely sink  
 Into his mother earth without such pomp  
 Of grief, depart without occasion given  
 By him for such array of fortitude.  
 Full seventy winters hath he lived, and mark !  
 This simple Child will mourn his one short hour,  
 And I shall miss him : scanty tribute ! yet,  
 This wanting, he would leave the sight of men,  
 If love were his sole claim upon their care,  
 Like a ripe date which in the desert falls  
 Without a hand to gather it."

At this

I interposed, though loth to speak, and said,  
 "Can it be thus among so small a band  
 As ye must needs be here? in such a place  
 I would not willingly, methinks, lose sight  
 Of a departing cloud."—"Twas not for love"—  
 Answered the sick Man with a careless voice—  
 "That I came hither ; neither have I found  
 Among associates who have power of speech,  
 Nor in such other converse as is here,  
 Temptation so prevailing as to change  
 That mood, or undermine my first resolve."  
 Then, speaking in like careless sort, he said  
 To my benign Companion,—“Pity 'tis  
 That fortune did not guide you to this house  
 A few days earlier ; then would you have seen  
 What stuff the Dwellers in a solitude,  
 That seems by Nature hollowed out to be  
 The seat and bosom of pure innocence,  
 Are made of ; an ungracious matter this !  
 Which, for truth's sake, yet in remembrance too  
 Of past discussions with this zealous friend  
 And advocate of humble life, I now  
 Will force upon his notice ; undeterred  
 By the example of his own pure course,  
 And that respect and deference which a soul  
 May fairly claim, by niggard age enriched  
 In what she most doth value, love of God  
 And his frail creature Man ;—but ye shall hear.  
 I talk—and ye are standing in the sun  
 Without refreshment !”

Quickly had he spoken,  
 And, with light steps still quicker than his words,

Led toward the Cottage. Homely was the spot ;  
And, to my feeling, ere we reached the door,  
Had almost a forbidding nakedness ;  
Less fair, I grant, even painfully less fair,  
Than it appeared when from the beetling rock  
We had looked down upon it. All within,  
As left by the departed company,  
Was silent ; save the solitary clock  
That on mine ear ticked with a mournful sound.—  
Following our Guide we clomb the cottage-stairs  
And reached a small apartment dark and low,  
Which was no sooner entered than our Host  
Said gaily, "This is my domain, my cell,  
My hermitage, my cabin, what you will—  
I love it better than a snail his house.  
But now ye shall be feasted with our best."

So, with more ardour than an unripe girl  
Left one day mistress of her mother's stores,  
He went about his hospitable task.  
My eyes were busy, and my thoughts no less,  
And pleased I looked upon my grey-haired Friend,  
As if to thank him ; he returned that look,  
Cheered, plainly, and yet serious. What a wreck  
Had we about us ! scattered was the floor,  
And, in like sort, chair, window-seat, and shelf,  
With books, maps, fossils, withered plants and flowers,  
And tufts of mountain moss. Mechanic tools  
Lay intermixed with scraps of paper, some  
Scribbled with verse : a broken angling-rod  
And shattered telescope, together linked  
By cobwebs, stood within a dusty nook ;  
And instruments of music, some half-made,  
Some in disgrace, hung dangling from the walls.  
But speedily the promise was fulfilled ;  
A feast before us, and a courteous Host  
Inviting us in glee to sit and eat.  
A napkin, white as foam of that rough brook  
By which it had been bleached, o'erspread the board ;  
And was itself half-covered with a store  
Of dainties—oaten bread, curd, cheese, and cream ;  
And cakes of butter curiously embossed,  
Butter that had imbibed from meadow-flowers  
A golden hue, delicate as their own  
Faintly reflected in a lingering stream.

Nor lacked, for more delight on that warm day,  
Our table, small parade of garden fruits,  
And whortle-berries from the mountain side.  
The Child, who long ere this had stilled his sobs,  
Was now a help to his late comforter,  
And moved, a willing Page, as he was bid,  
Ministering to our need.

In genial mood,  
While at our pastoral banquet thus we sate  
Fronting the window of that little cell,  
I could not, ever and anon, forbear  
To glance an upward look on two huge Peaks  
That from some other vale peered into this.  
"Those lusty twins," exclaimed our host, "if here  
It were your lot to dwell, would soon become  
Your prized companions.—Many are the notes  
Which, in his tuneful course, the wind draws forth  
From rocks, woods, caverns, heaths, and dashing shores;  
And well those lofty brethren bear their part  
In the wild concert—chiefly when the storm  
Rides high; then all the upper air they fill  
With roaring sound, that ceases not to flow,  
Like smoke, along the level of the blast,  
In mighty current; theirs, too, is the song  
Of stream and headlong flood that seldom fails;  
And, in the grim and breathless hour of noon,  
Methinks that I have heard them echo back  
The thunder's greeting. Nor have nature's laws  
Left them ungifted with a power to yield  
Music of finer tone; a harmony,  
So do I call it, though it be the hand  
Of silence, though there be no voice;—the clouds,  
The mist, the shadows, light of golden suns,  
Motions of moonlight, all come thither—touch,  
And have an answer—thither come, and shape  
A language not unwelcome to sick hearts  
And idle spirits:—there the sun himself,  
At the calm close of summer's longest day,  
Rests his substantial orb;—between those heights  
And on the top of either pinnacle,  
More keenly than elsewhere in night's blue vault,  
Sparkle the stars, as of their station proud.  
Thoughts are not busier in the mind of man  
Than the mute agents stirring there:—alone  
Here do I sit and watch——"

A fall of voice,

Regretted like the nightingale's last note,  
Had scarcely closed this high-wrought strain of rapture  
Ere with inviting smile the Wanderer said :

" Now for the tale with which you threatened us ! "

" In truth the threat escaped me unawares :

Should the tale tire you, let this challenge stand  
For my excuse. Dissevered from mankind,

As to your eyes and thoughts we must have seemed

When ye looked down upon us from the crag,

Islanders 'mid a stormy mountain sea,

We are not so ;—perpetually we touch

Upon the vulgar ordinances of the world ;

And he, whom this our cottage hath to-day

Relinquished, lived dependent for his bread

Upon the laws of public charity.

The Housewife, tempted by such slender gains

As might from that occasion be distilled,

Opened, as she before had done for me,

Her doors to admit this homeless Pensioner ;

The portion gave of coarse but wholesome fare

Which appetite required—a blind dull nook,

Such as she had, the *kenel* of his rest !

This, in itself not ill, would yet have been

Ill borne in earlier life ; but his was now

The still contentedness of seventy years.

Calm did he sit under the wide-spread tree

Of his old age : and yet less calm and meek,

Winningly meek or venerably calm,

Than slow and torpid ; paying in this wise

A penalty, if penalty it were,

For spendthrift feats, excesses of his prime.

I loved the old Man, for I pitied him !

A task it was, I own, to hold discourse

With one so slow in gathering up his thoughts,

But he was a cheap pleasure to my eyes ;

Mild, inoffensive, ready in *his* way,

And helpful to his utmost power : and there

Our housewife knew full well what she possessed !

He was her vassal of all labour, tilled

Her garden, from the pasture fetched her kine ;

And, one among the orderly array

Of hay-makers, beneath the burning sun

Maintained his place ; or heedfully pursued

His course, on errands bound, to other vales,

Leading sometimes an inexperienced child  
Too young for any profitable task.  
So moved he like a shadow that performed  
Substantial service. Mark me now, and learn  
For what reward!—The moon her monthly round  
Hath not completed since our dame, the queen  
Of this one cottage and this lonely dale,  
Into my little sanctuary rushed—  
Voice to a rueful treble humanized,  
And features in deplorable dismay.  
I treat the matter lightly, but, alas!  
It is most serious: persevering rain  
Had fallen in torrents; all the mountain tops  
Were hidden, and black vapours coursed their sides;  
This had I seen, and saw; but, till she spake,  
Was wholly ignorant that my ancient Friend—  
Who at her bidding, early and alone,  
Had clomb aloft to delve the moorland turf  
For winter fuel—to his noontide meal  
Returned not, and now, haply, on the heights  
Lay at the mercy of this raging storm.  
'Inhuman!'—said I, 'was an old Man's life  
Not worth the trouble of a thought?—alas!  
This notice comes too late.' With joy I saw  
Her husband enter—from a distant vale.  
We sallied forth together; found the tools  
Which the neglected veteran had dropped,  
But through all quarters looked for him in vain.  
We shouted—but no answer! Darkness fell  
Without remission of the blast or shower,  
And fears for our own safety drove us home.

I, who weep little, did, I will confess,  
The moment I was seated here alone,  
Honour my little cell with some few tears  
Which anger and resentment could not dry.  
All night the storm endured; and, soon as help  
Had been collected from the neighbouring vale,  
With morning we renewed our quest: the wind  
Was fallen, the rain abated, but the hills  
Lay shrouded in impenetrable mist;  
And long and hopelessly we sought in vain:  
Till, chancing on that lofty ridge to pass  
A heap of ruin—almost without walls  
And wholly without roof (the bleached remains  
Of a small chapel, where, in ancient time,

The peasants of these lonely valleys used  
To meet for worship on that central height)—  
We there espied the object of our search,  
Lying full three parts buried among tufis  
Of heath-plant, under and above him strewn,  
To baffle, as he might, the watery storm :  
And there we found him breathing peaceably,  
Snug as a child that hides itself in sport  
'Mid a green hay-cock in a sunny field.  
We spake—he made reply, but would not stir  
At our entreaty ; less from want of power  
Than apprehension and bewildering thoughts.

So was he lifted gently from the ground,  
And with their freight homeward the shepherds moved  
Through the dull mist, I following—when a step,  
A single step, that freed me from the skirts  
Of the blind vapour, opened to my view  
Glory beyond all glory ever seen  
By waking sense or by the dreaming soul !  
The appearance, instantaneously disclosed,  
Was of a mighty city—boldly say  
A wilderness of building, sinking far  
And self-withdrawn into a boundless depth,  
Far sinking into splendour—without end !  
Fabric it seemed of diamond and of gold,  
With alabaster domes, and silver spires,  
And blazing terrace upon terrace, high  
Uplifted ; here, serene pavilions bright,  
In avenues disposed ; there, towers begirt  
With battlements that on their restless fronts  
Bore stars—illumination of all gems !  
By earthly nature had the effect been wrought  
Upon the dark materials of the storm  
Now pacified ; on them, and on the coves  
And mountain-steeps and summits, whereunto  
The vapours had receded, taking there  
Their station under a cerulean sky.  
Oh, 'twas an unimaginable sight !  
Clouds, mists, streams, watery rocks and emerald turf,  
Clouds of all tincture, rocks and sapphire sky,  
Confused, commingled, mutually inflamed,  
Molten together, and composing thus,  
Each lost in each, that marvellous array  
Of temple, palace, citadel, and huge  
Fantastic pomp of structure without name,

In fleecy folds voluminous, enwrapped.  
 Right in the midst, where interspace appeared  
 Of open court, an object like a throne  
 Under a shining canopy of state  
 Stood fixed ; and fixed resemblances were seen  
 To implements of ordinary use,  
 But vast in size, in substance glorified ;  
 Such as by Hebrew Prophets were beheld  
 In vision—forms uncouth of mightiest power  
 For admiration and mysterious awe.  
 This little Vale, a dwelling-place of Man,  
 Lay low beneath my feet ; 'twas visible—  
 I saw not, but I felt that it was there.  
 That which I *saw* was the revealed abode  
 Of Spirits in beatitude : my heart  
 Swelled in my breast—' I have been dead,' I cried,  
 ' And now I live ! Oh ! wherefore *do* I live ?'  
 And with that pang I prayed to be no more !—  
 —But I forget our Charge, as utterly  
 I then forgot him :—there I stood and gazed :  
 The apparition faded not away,  
 And I descended.

Having reached the house,  
 I found its rescued inmate safely lodged,  
 And in serene possession of himself,  
 Beside a fire whose genial warmth seemed met  
 By a faint shining from the heart, a gleam,  
 Of comfort, spread over his pallid face.  
 Great show of joy the housewife made, and truly  
 Was glad to find her conscience set at ease ;  
 And not less glad, for sake of her good name,  
 That the poor Sufferer had escaped with life.  
 But, though he seemed at first to have received  
 No harm, and uncomplaining as before  
 Went through his usual tasks, a silent change  
 Soon showed itself : he lingered three short weeks ;  
 And from the cottage hath been borne to-day.

So ends my dolorous tale, and glad I am  
 That it is ended." At these words he turned—  
 And, with blithe air of open fellowship,  
 Brought from the cupboard wine and stouter cheer,  
 Like one who would be merry. Seeing this,  
 My grey-haired Friend said courteously—"Nay, nay,  
 You have regaled us as a hermit ought ;

Now let us forth into the sun!"—Our Host  
Rose, though reluctantly, and forth we went.

BOOK THIRD  
DESPONDENCY

ARGUMENT

Images in the Valley—Another Recess in it entered and described—Wanderer's sensations—Solitary's excited by the same objects—Contrast between these—Despondency of the Solitary gently reproved—Conversation exhibiting the Solitary's past and present opinions and feelings, till he enters upon his own History at length—His domestic felicity—Afflictions—Rejection—Roused by the French Revolution—Disappointment and disgust—Voyage to America—Disappointment and disgust pursue him—His return—His languor and depression of mind, from want of faith in the great truths of Religion, and want of confidence in the virtue of Mankind.

A HUMMING BEE—a little tinkling rill—  
A pair of falcons wheeling on the wing,  
In clamorous agitation, round the crest  
Of a tall rock, their airy citadel—  
By each and all of these the pensive ear  
Was greeted, in the silence that ensued,  
When through the cottage-threshold we had passed,  
And, deep within that lonesome valley, stood  
Once more beneath the concave of a blue  
And cloudless sky.—Anon exclaimed our Host—  
Triumphantly dispersing with the taunt  
The shade of discontent which on his brow  
Had gathered,—“Ye have left my cell,—but see  
How Nature hems you in with friendly arms!  
And by her help ye are my prisoners still.  
But which way shall I lead you?—how contrive,  
In spot so parsimoniously endowed,  
That the brief hours, which yet remain, may reap  
Some recompense of knowledge or delight?”  
So saying, round he looked, as if perplexed;  
And, to remove those doubts, my grey-haired Friend  
Said—“Shall we take this pathway for our guide?—  
Upward it winds, as if, in summer heats,  
Its line had first been fashioned by the flock  
Seeking a place of refuge at the root  
Of yon black Yew-tree, whose protruded boughs  
Darken the silver bosom of the crag,  
From which she draws her meagre sustenance.  
There in commodious shelter may we rest.

Or let us trace this streamlet to its source ;  
Feebly it tinkles with an earthy sound,  
And a few steps may bring us to the spot  
Where, haply, crowned with flowerets and green herbs,  
The mountain infant to the sun comes forth,  
Like human life from darkness."—A quick turn  
Through a strait passage of encumbered ground,  
Proved that such hope was vain :—for now we stood  
Shut out from prospect of the open vale,  
And saw the water, that composed this rill,  
Descending, disembodied, and diffused  
O'er the smooth surface of an ample crag,  
Lofty, and steep, and naked as a tower.  
All further progress here was barred ;—And who,  
Thought I, if master of a vacant hour,  
Here would not linger, willingly detained ?  
Whether to such wild objects he were led  
When copious rains have magnified the stream  
Into a loud and white-robed waterfall,  
Or introduced at this more quiet time.

Upon a semicirque of turf-clad ground,  
The hidden nook discovered to our view  
A mass of rock, resembling, as it lay  
Right at the foot of that moist precipice,  
A stranded ship, with keel upturned, that rests  
Fearless of winds and waves. Three several stones  
Stood near, of smaller size, and not unlike  
To monumental pillars : and, from these  
Some little space disjoined, a pair were seen,  
That with united shoulders bore aloft  
A fragment, like an altar, flat and smooth :  
Barren the tablet, yet thereon appeared  
A tall and shining holly, that had found  
A hospitable chink, and stood upright,  
As if inserted by some human hand  
In mockery, to wither in the sun,  
Or lay its beauty flat before a breeze,  
The first that entered. But no breeze did now  
Find entrance ;—high or low appeared no trace  
Of motion, save the water that descended,  
Diffused adown that barrier of steep rock,  
And softly creeping, like a breath of air,  
Such as is sometimes seen, and hardly seen,  
To brush the still breast of a crystal lake.

"Behold a cabinet for sages built,  
Which kings might envy!"—Praise to this effect  
Broke from the happy old Man's reverend lip;  
Who to the Solitary turned, and said,  
"In sooth, with love's familiar privilege,  
You have decried the wealth which is your own.  
Among these rocks and stones, methinks, I see  
More than the heedless impress that belongs  
To lonely nature's casual work: they bear  
A semblance strange of power intelligent,  
And of design not wholly worn away.  
Boldest of plants that ever faced the wind,  
How gracefully that slender shrub looks forth  
From its fantastic birth-place! And I own,  
Some shadowy intimations haunt me here,  
That in these shows a chronicle survives  
Of purposes akin to those of Man,  
But wrought with mightier arm than now prevails.  
—Voiceless the stream descends into the gulf  
With timid lapse;—and lo! while in this strait  
I stand—the chasm of sky above my head  
Is heaven's profoundest azure; no domain  
For fickle, short-lived clouds to occupy,  
Or to pass through; but rather an abyss  
In which the everlasting stars abide;  
And whose soft gloom, and boundless depth, might tempt  
The curious eye to look for them by day.  
—Hail Contemplation! from the stately towers,  
Reared by the industrious hand of human art  
To lift thee high above the misty air  
And turbulence of murmuring cities vast;  
From academic groves, that have for thee  
Been planted, hither come and find a lodge  
To which thou mayst resort for holier peace,—  
From whose calm centre thou, through height or depth,  
Mayst penetrate, wherever truth shall lead;  
Measuring through all degrees, until the scale  
Of time and conscious nature disappear,  
Lost in unsearchable eternity!"

A pause ensued; and with minuter care  
We scanned the various features of the scene:  
And soon the Tenant of that lonely vale  
With courteous voice thus spake—

"I should have grieved

Hereafter, not escaping self-reproach,  
If from my poor retirement ye had gone  
Leaving this nook unvisited : but, in sooth,  
Your unexpected presence had so roused  
My spirits, that they were bent on enterprise ;  
And, like an ardent hunter, I forgot,  
Or, shall I say ?—disdained, the game that lurks  
At my own door. The shapes before our eyes  
And their arrangement, doubtless must be deemed  
The sport of Nature, aided by blind Chance  
Rudely to mock the works of toiling Man.  
And hence, this upright shaft of unhewn stone,  
From Fancy, willing to set off her stores  
By sounding titles, hath acquired the name  
Of Pompey's pillar ; that I gravely style  
My Theban obelisk ; and, there, behold  
A Druid cromlech !—thus I entertain  
The antiquarian humour, and am pleased  
To skim along the surfaces of things,  
Beguiling harmlessly the listless hours.  
But if the spirit be oppressed by sense  
Of instability, revolt, decay,  
And change, and emptiness, these freaks of Nature  
And her blind helper Chance, do *then* suffice  
To quicken, and to aggravate—to feed  
Pity and scorn, and melancholy pride,  
Not less than that huge Pile (from some abyss  
Of mortal power unquestionably sprung)  
Whose hoary diadem of pendent rocks  
Confines the shrill-voiced whirlwind, round and round  
Eddying within its vast circumference,  
On Sarum's naked plain—than pyramid  
Of Egypt, unsubverted, undissolved—  
Or Syria's marble ruins towering high  
Above the sandy desert, in the light  
Of sun or moon.—Forgive me, if I say  
That an appearance which hath raised your minds  
To an exalted pitch (the self-same cause  
Different effect producing) is for me  
Fraught rather with depression than delight,  
Though shame it were, could I not look around,  
By the reflection of your pleasure, pleased.  
Yet happier in my judgment, even than you  
With your bright transports fairly may be deemed,  
The wandering Herbalist,—who, clear alike

From vain, and, that worse evil, vexing thoughts,  
Casts, if he ever chance to enter here,  
Upon these uncouth Forms a slight regard  
Of transitory interest, and peeps round  
For some rare floweret of the hills, or plant  
Of craggy fountain; what he hopes for wins,  
Or learns, at least, that 'tis not to be won:  
Then, keen and eager, as a fine-nosed bound,  
By soul-engrossing instinct driven along  
Through wood or open field, the harmless Man  
Departs, intent upon his onward quest!—  
Nor is that Fellow-wanderer, so deem I,  
Less to be envied, (you may trace him oft  
By scars which his activity has left  
Beside our roads and pathways, though, thank Heaven!  
This covert nook reports not of his hand)  
He who with pocket-hammer smites the edge  
Of luckless rock or prominent stone, disguised  
In weather-stains or crusted o'er by Nature  
With her first growths, detaching by the stroke  
A chip or splinter—to resolve his doubts;  
And, with that ready answer satisfied,  
The substance classes by some barbarous name,  
And hurries on; or from the fragments picks  
His specimen, if but haply interveined  
With sparkling mineral, or should crystal cube  
Lurk in its cells—and thinks himself enriched,  
Wealthier, and doubtless wiser, than before!  
Intrusted safely each to his pursuit,  
Earnest alike, let both from hill to hill  
Range; if it please them, sped from clime to clime;  
The mind is full—and free from pain their pastime."

"Then," said I, interposing, "One is near,  
Who cannot but possess in your esteem  
Place worthier still of envy. May I name,  
Without offence, that fair-faced cottage-boy?  
Dame Nature's pupil of the lowest form,  
Youngest apprentice in the school of art!  
Him, as we entered from the open glen,  
You might have noticed, busily engaged,  
Heart, soul, and hands,—in mending the defects  
Left in the fabric of a leaky dam  
Raised for enabling this penurious stream  
To turn a slender mill (that new-made plaything)  
For his delight—the happiest he of all!"

"Far happiest," answered the desponding Man,  
 "If, such as now he is, he might remain !  
 Ah ! what avails imagination high  
 Or question deep ? what profits all that earth,  
 Or heaven's blue vault, is suffered to put forth  
 Of impulse or allurements, for the Soul  
 To quit the beaten track of life, and soar  
 Far as she finds a yielding element  
 In past or future ; far as she can go  
 Through time or space—if neither in the one,  
 Nor in the other region, nor in aught  
 That Fancy, dreaming o'er the map of things,  
 Hath placed beyond these penetrable bounds,  
 Words of assurance can be heard ; if nowhere  
 A habitation, for consummate good,  
 Or for progressive virtue, by the search  
 Can be attained,—a better sanctuary  
 From doubt and sorrow, than the senseless grave ?"

"Is this," the grey-haired Wanderer mildly said,  
 "The voice, which we so lately overheard,  
 To that same child, addressing tenderly  
 The consolations of a hopeful mind ?  
*'His body is at rest, his soul in heaven.'*  
 These were your words ; and, verily, methinks  
 Wisdom is oft-times nearer when we stoop  
 Than when we soar."—

The Other, not displeased,  
 Promptly replied—"My notion is the same.  
 And I, without reluctance, could decline  
 All act of inquisition whence we rise,  
 And what, when breath hath ceased, we may become.  
 Here are we, in a bright and breathing world.  
 Our origin, what matters it ? In lack  
 Of worthier explanation, say at once  
 With the American (a thought which suits  
 The place where now we stand) that certain men  
 Leapt out together from a rocky cave ;  
 And these were the first parents of mankind :  
 Or, if a different image be recalled  
 By the warm sunshine, and the jocund voice  
 Of insects chirping out their careless lives  
 On these soft beds of thyme-besprinkled turf,  
 Choose, with the gay Athenian, a conceit  
 As sound—blithe race ! whose mantles were bedecked  
 With golden grasshoppers, in sign that they

Had sprung, like those bright creatures, from the soil  
Whereon their endless generations dwelt.  
But stop!—these theoretic fancies jar  
On serious minds: then, as the Hindoos draw  
Their holy Ganges from a skiey fount,  
Even so deduce the stream of human life  
From seats of power divine; and hope, or trust,  
That our existence winds her stately course  
Beneath the sun, like Ganges, to make part  
Of a living ocean; or, to sink engulfed,  
Like Niger, in impenetrable sands  
And utter darkness: thought which may be faced,  
Though comfortless!—

Not of myself I speak:

Such acquiescence neither doth imply,  
In me, a meekly-bending spirit soothed  
By natural piety; nor a lofty mind,  
By philosophic discipline prepared  
For calm subjection to acknowledged law;  
Pleased to have been, contented not to be.  
Such palms I boast not;—no! to me, who find,  
Reviewing my past way, much to condemn,  
Little to praise, and nothing to regret,  
(Save some remembrances of dream-like joys  
That scarcely seem to have belonged to me)  
If I must take my choice between the pair  
That rule alternately the weary hours,  
Night is than day more acceptable; sleep  
Doth, in my estimate of good, appear  
A better state than waking; death than sleep:  
Feelingly sweet is stillness after storm,  
Though under covert of the wormy ground!

Yet be it said, in justice to myself,  
That in more genial times, when I was free  
To explore the destiny of human kind  
(Not as an intellectual game pursued  
With curious subtilty, from wish to cheat  
Irrksome sensations; but by love of truth  
Urged on, or haply by intense delight  
In feeding thought, wherever thought could feed)  
I did not rank with those (too dull or nice,  
For to my judgment such they then appeared,  
Or too aspiring, thankless at the best)  
Who, in this frame of human life, perceive

An object whereunto their souls are tied  
 In discontented wedlock ; nor did e'er,  
 From me, those dark impervious shades, that hang  
 Upon the region whither we are bound,  
 Exclude a power to enjoy the vital beams  
 Of present sunshine.—Deities that float  
 On wings, angelic Spirits ! I could muse  
 O'er what from eldest time we have been told  
 Of your bright forms and glorious faculties,  
 And with the imagination rest content,  
 Not wishing more ; repining not to tread  
 The little sinuous path of earthly care,  
 By flowers embellished, and by springs refreshed.  
 —' Blow winds of autumn !—let your chilling breath  
 ' Take the live herbage from the mead, and strip  
 ' The shady forest of its green attire,—  
 ' And let the bursting clouds to fury rouse  
 ' The gentle brooks !—Your desolating sway,  
 ' Sheds,' I exclaimed, ' no sadness upon me,  
 ' And no disorder in your rage I find.  
 ' What dignity, what beauty, in this change  
 ' From mild to angry, and from sad to gay,  
 ' Alternate and revolving ! How benign,  
 ' How rich in animation and delight,  
 ' How bountiful these elements—compared  
 ' With aught, as more desirable and fair,  
 ' Devised by fancy for the golden age ;  
 ' Or the perpetual warbling that prevails  
 ' In Arcady, beneath unaltered skies,  
 ' Through the long year in constant quiet bound,  
 ' Night hushed as night, and day serene as day !'  
 —But why this tedious record ?—Age, we know,  
 Is garrulous ; and solitude is apt  
 To anticipate the privilege of Age,  
 From far ye come ; and surely with a hope  
 Of better entertainment :—let us hence !"

Loth to forsake the spot, and still more loth  
 To be diverted from our present theme,  
 I said, " My thoughts, agreeing, Sir, with yours,  
 Would push this censure farther ;—for, if smiles  
 Of scornful pity be the just reward  
 Of Poesy thus courteously employed  
 In framing models to improve the scheme  
 Of Man's existence, and recast the world,

Why should not grave Philosophy be styled,  
Herself, a dreamer of a kindred stock,  
A dreamer yet more spiritless and dull?  
Yes, shall the fine immunities she boasts  
Establish sounder titles of esteem  
For her, who (all too timid and reserved  
For onset, for resistance too inert,  
Too weak for suffering, and for hope too tame)  
Placed, among flowery gardens curtained round  
With world-excluding groves, the brotherhood  
Of soft Epicureans, taught—if they  
The ends of being would secure, and win  
The crown of wisdom—to yield up their souls  
To a voluptuous unconcern, preferring  
Tranquillity to all things. Or is she,"  
I cried, "more worthy of regard, the Power,  
Who, for the sake of sterner quiet, closed  
The Stoic's heart against the vain approach  
Of admiration, and all sense of joy?"

His countenance gave notice that my zeal  
Accorded little with his present mind ;  
I ceased, and he resumed.—"Ah ! gentle Sir,  
Slight, if you will, the *means* ; but spare to slight  
The *end* of those, who did, by system, rank,  
As the prime object of a wise man's aim,  
Security from shock of accident,  
Release from fear ; and cherished peaceful days  
For their own sakes, as mortal life's chief good,  
And only reasonable felicity.  
What motive drew, what impulse, I would ask,  
Through a long course of later ages, drove,  
The hermit to his cell in forest wide ;  
Or what detained him, till his closing eyes  
Took their last farewell of the sun and stars,  
Fast anchored in the desert ?—Not alone  
Dread of the persecuting sword, remorse,  
Wrongs unredressed, or insults unavenged  
And unavengeable, defeated pride,  
Prosperity subverted, maddening want,  
Friendship betrayed, affection unreturned,  
Love with despair, or grief in agony ;—  
Not always from intolerable pangs  
He fled ; but, compassed round by pleasure, sighed  
For independent happiness ; craving peace,

The central feeling of all happiness,  
Not as a refuge from distress or pain,  
A breathing-time, vacation, or a truce,  
But for its absolute self ; a life of peace,  
Stability without regret or fear ;  
That hath been, is, and shall be evermore !—  
Such the reward he sought ; and wore out life,  
There, where on few external things his heart  
Was set, and those his own ; or, if not his,  
Subsisting under nature's stedfast law.

What other yearning was the master tie  
Of the monastic brotherhood, upon rock  
Aërial, or in green secluded vale,  
One after one, collected from afar,  
An undissolving fellowship ?—What but this,  
The universal instinct of repose,  
The longing for confirmed tranquillity,  
Inward and outward ; humble, yet sublime :  
The life where hope and memory are as one ;  
Where earth is quiet and her face unchanged  
Save by the simplest toil of human hands  
Or seasons' difference ; the immortal Soul  
Consistent in self-rule ; and heaven revealed  
To meditation in that quietness !—  
Such was their scheme : and though the wished-for end  
By multitudes was missed, perhaps attained  
By none, they for the attempt, and pains employed,  
Do, in my present censure, stand redeemed  
From the unqualified disdain, that once  
Would have been cast upon them by my voice  
Delivering her decisions from the seat  
Of forward youth—that scruples not to solve  
Doubts, and determine questions, by the rules  
Of inexperienced judgment, ever prone  
To overweening faith ; and is inflamed,  
By courage, to demand from real life  
The test of act and suffering, to provoke  
Hostility—how dreadful when it comes,  
Whether affliction be the foe, or guilt !

A child of earth, I rested, in that stage  
Of my past course to which these thoughts advert,  
Upon earth's native energies ; forgetting  
That mine was a condition which required  
Nor energy, nor fortitude—a calm

Without vicissitude ; which, if the like  
Had been presented to my view elsewhere,  
I might have even been tempted to despise.  
But no—for the serene was also bright ;  
Enlivened happiness with joy o'erflowing,  
With joy, and—oh ! that memory should survive  
To speak the word—with rapture ! Nature's boon,  
Life's genuine inspiration, happiness  
Above what rules can teach, or fancy feign ;  
Abused, as all possessions *are* abused  
That are not prized according to their worth.  
And yet, what worth ? what good is given to men,  
More solid than the gilded clouds of heaven ?  
What joy more lasting than a vernal flower ?—  
None ! 'tis the general plaint of human kind  
In solitude : and mutually addressed  
From each to all, for wisdom's sake :—This truth  
The priest announces from his holy seat :  
And, crowned with garlands in the summer grove,  
The poet fits it to his pensive lyre.  
Yet, ere that final resting-place be gained,  
Sharp contradictions may arise, by doom  
Of this same life, compelling us to grieve  
That the prosperities of love and joy  
Should be permitted, oft-times, to endure  
So long, and be at once cast down for ever.  
Oh ! tremble, ye, to whom hath been assigned  
A course of days composing happy months,  
And they as happy years ; the present still  
So like the past, and both so firm a pledge  
Of a congenial future, that the wheels  
Of pleasure move without the aid of hope :  
For Mutability is Nature's bane ;  
And slighted Hope *will* be avenged ; and, when  
Ye need her favours, ye shall find her not ;  
But in her stead—fear—doubt—and agony ! ”

This was the bitter language of the heart :  
But, while he spake, look, gesture, tone of voice,  
Though discomposed and vehement, were such  
As skill and graceful nature might suggest  
To a proficient of the tragic scene  
Standing before the multitude, beset  
With dark events. Desirous to divert  
Or stem the current of the speaker's thoughts,

We signified a wish to leave that place  
 Of stillness and close privacy, a nook  
 That seemed for self-examination made ;  
 Or, for confession, in the sinner's need,  
 Hidden from all men's view. To our attempt  
 He yielded not ; but, pointing to a slope  
 Of mossy turf defended from the sun,  
 And on that couch inviting us to rest,  
 Full on that tender-hearted Man he turned  
 A serious eye, and his speech thus renewed.

"You never saw, your eyes did never look  
 On the bright form of Her whom once I loved :—  
 Her silver voice was heard upon the earth,  
 A sound unknown to you ; else, honoured Friend !  
 Your heart had borne a pitiable share  
 Of what I suffered, when I wept that loss,  
 And suffer now, not seldom, from the thought  
 That I remember, and can weep no more.—  
 Stripped as I am of all the golden fruit  
 Of self-esteem ; and by the cutting blasts  
 Of self-reproach familiarly assailed ;  
 Yet would I not be of such wintry bareness  
 But that some leaf of your regard should hang  
 Upon my naked branches :—lively thoughts  
 Give birth, full often, to unguarded words ;  
 I grieve that, in your presence, from my tongue  
 Too much of frailty hath already dropped ;  
 But that too much demands still more.

You know,

Revered Compatriot—and to you, kind Sir,  
 (Not to be deemed a stranger, as you come  
 Following the guidance of these welcome feet  
 To our secluded vale) it may be told—  
 That my demerits did not sue in vain  
 To One on whose mild radiance many gazed  
 With hope, and all with pleasure. This fair Bride—  
 In the devotedness of youthful love,  
 Preferring me to parents, and the choir  
 Of gay companions, to the natal roof,  
 And all known places and familiar sights  
 (Resigned with sadness gently weighing down  
 Her trembling expectations, but no more  
 Than did to her due honour, and to me  
 Yielded, that day, a confidence sublime

In what I had to build upon)—this Bride,  
Young, modest, meek, and beautiful, I led  
To a low cottage in a sunny bay,  
Where the salt sea innocuously breaks,  
And the sea breeze as innocently breathes,  
On Devon's leafy shores ;—a sheltered hold,  
In a soft clime encouraging the soil  
To a luxuriant bounty !—As our steps  
Approach the embowered abode—our chosen seat—  
See, rooted in the earth, her kindly bed,  
The unendangered myrtle, decked with flowers,  
Before the threshold stands to welcome us !  
While, in the flowering myrtle's neighbourhood,  
Not overlooked but courting no regard,  
Those native plants, the holly and the yew,  
Gave modest intimation to the mind  
How willingly their aid they would unite  
With the green myrtle, to endear the hours  
Of winter, and protect that pleasant place.  
—Wild were the walks upon those lonely Downs,  
Track leading into track ; how marked, how worn  
Into bright verdure, between fern and gorse  
Winding away its never-ending line  
On their smooth surface, evidence was none ;  
But, there, lay open to our daily haunt,  
A range of unappropriated earth,  
Where youth's ambitious feet might move at large ;  
Whence, unmolested wanderers, we beheld  
The shining giver of the day diffuse  
His brightness o'er a tract of sea and land  
Gay as our spirits, free as our desires ;  
As our enjoyments, boundless.—From those heights  
We dropped, at pleasure, into sylvan combs ;  
Where arbours of impenetrable shade,  
And mossy seats, detained us side by side,  
With hearts at ease, and knowledge in our hearts  
'That all the grove and all the day was ours.'

O happy time ! still happier was at hand ;  
For Nature called my Partner to resign  
Her share in the pure freedom of that life,  
Enjoyed by us in common.—To my hope,  
To my heart's wish, my tender Mate became  
The thankful captive of maternal bonds ;  
And those wild paths were left to me alone.

There could I meditate on follies past ;  
 And, like a weary voyager escaped  
 From risk and hardship, inwardly retrace  
 A course of vain delights and thoughtless guilt,  
 And self-indulgence—without shame pursued.  
 There, undisturbed, could think of and could thank  
 Her whose submissive spirit was to me  
 Rule and restraint—my guardian—shall I say  
 That earthly Providence, whose guiding love  
 Within a port of rest had lodged me safe ;  
 Safe from temptation, and from danger far ?  
 Strains followed of acknowledgment addressed  
 To an authority enthroned above  
 The reach of sight ; from whom, as from their source  
 Proceed all visible ministers of good  
 That walk the earth—Father of heaven and earth,  
 Father, and king, and judge, adored and feared !  
 These acts of mind, and memory, and heart,  
 And spirit—interrupted and relieved  
 By observations transient as the glance  
 Of flying sunbeams, or to the outward form  
 Cleaving with power inherent and intense,  
 As the mute insect fixed upon the plant  
 On whose soft leaves it hangs, and from whose cup  
 It draws its nourishment imperceptibly—  
 Endeared my wanderings ; and the mother's kiss  
 And infant's smile awaited my return.

In privacy we dwell, a wedded pair,  
 Companions daily, often all day long ;  
 Not placed by fortune within easy reach  
 Of various intercourse, nor wishing aught  
 Beyond the allowance of our own fire-side,  
 The twain within our happy cottage born,  
 Inmates, and heirs of our united love ;  
 Graced mutually by difference of sex,  
 And with no wider interval of time  
 Between their several births than served for one  
 To establish something of a leader's sway ;  
 Yet left them joined by sympathy in age ;  
 Equals in pleasure, fellows in pursuit.  
 On these two pillars rested as in air  
 Our solitude.

It soothes me to perceive,  
 Your courtesy withholds not from my words

Attentive audience. But, oh! gentle Friends,  
As times of quiet and unbroken peace,  
Though, for a nation, times of blessedness,  
Give back faint echoes from the historian's page;  
So, in the imperfect sounds of this discourse,  
Depressed I hear, how faithless is the voice  
Which those most blissful days reverberate.  
What special record can, or need, be given  
To rules and habits, whereby much was done,  
But all within the sphere of little things;  
Of humble, though, to us, important cares,  
And precious interests? Smoothly did our life  
Advance, swerving not from the path prescribed;  
Her annual, her diurnal, round alike  
Maintained with faithful care. And you divine  
The worst effects that our condition saw  
If you imagine changes slowly wrought,  
And in their progress unperceivable;  
Not wished for; sometimes noticed with a sigh,  
(Whate'er of good or lovely they might bring)  
Sighs of regret, for the familiar good  
And loveliness endeared which they removed.

Seven years of occupation undisturbed  
Established seemingly a right to hold  
That happiness; and use and habit gave,  
To what an alien spirit had acquired,  
A patrimonial sanctity. And thus,  
With thoughts and wishes bounded to this world,  
I lived and breathed; most grateful—if to enjoy  
Without repining or desire for more,  
For different lot, or change to higher sphere,  
(Only except some impulses of pride  
With no determined object, though upheld  
By theories with suitable support)—  
Most grateful, if in such wise to enjoy  
Be proof of gratitude for what we have;  
Else, I allow, most thankless.—But, at once,  
From some dark seat of fatal power was urged  
A claim that shattered all.—Our blooming girl,  
Caught in the gripe of death, with such brief time  
To struggle in as scarcely would allow  
Her cheek to change its colour, was conveyed  
From us to inaccessible worlds, to regions  
Where height, or depth, admits not the approach

Of living man, though longing to pursue.  
 —With even as brief a warning—and how soon,  
 With what short interval of time between,  
 I tremble yet to think of—our last prop,  
 Our happy life's only remaining stay—  
 The brother followed ; and was seen no more.

Calm as a frozen lake when ruthless winds  
 Blow fiercely, agitating earth and sky,  
 The Mother now remained ; as if in her,  
 Who, to the lowest region of the soul,  
 Had been erewhile unsettled and disturbed,  
 This second visitation had no power  
 To shake ; but only to bind up and seal ;  
 And to establish thankfulness of heart  
 In Heaven's determinations, ever just.  
 The eminence whereon her spirit stood,  
 Mine was unable to attain. Immense  
 The space that severed us ! But, as the sight  
 Communicates with heaven's ethereal orbs  
 Incalculably distant ; so, I felt  
 That consolation may descend from far  
 (And that is intercourse, and union, too,)  
 While, overcome with speechless gratitude,  
 And, with a holier love inspired, I looked  
 On her—at once superior to my woes  
 And partner of my loss.—O heavy change,  
 Dimness o'er this clear luminary crept  
 Insensibly ;—the immortal and divine  
 Yielded to mortal reflux ; her pure glory,  
 As from the pinnacle of worldly state  
 Wretched ambition drops astounded, fell  
 Into a gulf obscure of silent grief,  
 And keen heart-anguish—of itself ashamed,  
 Yet obstinately cherishing itself :  
 And, so consumed, she melted from my arms ;  
 And left me, on this earth, disconsolate !

What followed cannot be reviewed in thought ;  
 Much less, retraced in words. If she, of life  
 Blameless, so intimate with love and joy  
 And all the tender motions of the soul,  
 Had been supplanted, could I hope to stand—  
 Infirm, dependent, and now destitute ?  
 I called on dreams and visions, to disclose  
 That which is veiled from waking thought ; conjured

Eternity, as men constrain a ghost  
To appear and answer ; to the grave I spake  
Imploringly ;—looked up, and asked the Heavens  
If Angels traversed their cerulean floors,  
If fixed or wandering star could tidings yield  
Of the departed spirit—what abode  
It occupies—what consciousness retains  
Of former loves and interests. Then my soul  
Turned inward,—to examine of what stuff  
Time's fetters are composed ; and life was put  
To inquisition, long and profitless !  
By pain of heart—now checked—and now impelled—  
The intellectual power, through words and things,  
Went sounding on, a dim and perilous way !  
And from those transports, and these toils abstruse,  
Some trace am I enabled to retain  
Of time, else lost ;—existing unto me  
Only by records in myself not found.

From that abstraction I was roused,—and how ?  
Even as a thoughtful shepherd by a flash  
Of lightning startled in a gloomy cave  
Of these wild hills. For, lo ! the dread Bastile,  
With all the chambers in its horrid towers,  
Fell to the ground :—by violence overthrown  
Of indignation ; and with shouts that drowned  
The crash it made in falling ! From the wreck  
A golden palace rose, or seemed to rise,  
The appointed seat of equitable law  
And mild paternal sway. The potent shock  
I felt : the transformation I perceived,  
As marvellously seized as in that moment  
When, from the blind mist issuing, I beheld  
Glory—beyond all glory ever seen,  
Confusion infinite of heaven and earth,  
Dazzling the soul. Meanwhile, prophetic harps  
In every grove were ringing, ' War shall cease ;  
' Did ye not hear that conquest is abjured ?  
' Bring garlands, bring forth choicest flowers, to deck  
' The tree of Liberty. '—My heart rebounded ;  
My melancholy voice the chorus joined ;  
—' Be joyful all ye nations ; in all lands,  
' Ye that are capable of joy be glad !  
' Henceforth, whate'er is wanting to yourselves  
' In others ye shall promptly find ;—and all,

'Enriched by mutual and reflected wealth,  
'Shall with one heart honour their common kind.'

Thus was I reconverted to the world ;  
Society became my glittering bride,  
And airy hopes my children.—From the depths  
Of natural passion, seemingly escaped,  
My soul diffused herself in wide embrace  
Of institutions, and the forms of things ;  
As they exist, in mutable array,  
Upon life's surface. What, though in my veins  
There flowed no Gallic blood, nor had I breathed  
The air of France, not less than Gallic zeal  
Kindled and burnt among the sapless twigs  
Of my exhausted heart. If busy men  
In sober conclave met, to weave a web  
Of amity, whose living threads should stretch  
Beyond the seas, and to the farthest pole,  
There did I sit, assisting. If, with noise  
And acclamation, crowds in open air  
Expressed the tumult of their minds, my voice  
There mingled, heard or not. The powers of song  
I left not uninvoked ; and, in still groves,  
Where mild enthusiasts tuned a pensive lay  
Of thanks and expectation, in accord  
With their belief, I sang Saturnian rule  
Returned,—a progeny of golden years  
Permitted to descend, and bless mankind.  
—With promises the Hebrew Scriptures teem :  
I felt their invitation ; and resumed  
A long-suspended office in the House  
Of public worship, where, the glowing phrase  
Of ancient inspiration serving me,  
I promised also,—with undaunted trust  
Foretold, and added prayer to prophecy ;  
The admiration winning of the crowd ;  
The help desiring of the pure devout.

Scorn and contempt forbid me to proceed ;  
But History, time's slavish scribe, will tell  
How rapidly the zealots of the cause  
Disbanded—or in hostile ranks appeared ;  
Some, tired of honest service ; these, outdone,  
Disgusted therefore, or appalled, by aims  
Of fiercer zealots—so confusion reigned,

And the more faithful were compelled to exclaim,  
As Brutus did to Virtue, 'Liberty,  
'I worshipped thee, and find thee but a Shade!'

Such recantation had for me no charm,  
Nor would I bend to it; who should have grieved  
At aught, however fair, that bore the mien  
Of a conclusion, or catastrophe.  
Why then conceal, that, when the simply good  
In timid selfishness withdrew, I sought  
Other support, not scrupulous whence it came;  
And, by what compromise it stood, not nice?  
Enough if notions seemed to be high-pitched,  
And qualities determined.—Among men  
So charactered did I maintain a strife  
Hopeless, and still more hopeless every hour;  
But, in the process, I began to feel  
That, if the emancipation of the world  
Were missed, I should at least secure my own,  
And be in part compensated. For rights,  
Widely—inveterately usurped upon,  
I spake with vehemence; and promptly seized  
All that Abstraction furnished for my needs  
Or purposes; nor scrupled to proclaim,  
And propagate, by liberty of life,  
Those new persuasions. Not that I rejoiced,  
Or even found pleasure, in such vagrant course,  
For its own sake; but farthest from the walk  
Which I had trod in happiness and peace,  
Was most inviting to a troubled mind;  
That, in a struggling and distempered world,  
Saw a seductive image of herself.  
Yet, mark the contradictions of which Man  
Is still the sport! Here Nature was my guide,  
The Nature of the dissolute; but thee,  
O fostering Nature! I rejected—smiled  
At others' tears in pity; and in scorn  
At those, which thy soft influence sometimes drew  
From my unguarded heart.—The tranquil shores  
Of Britain circumscribed me; else, perhaps  
I might have been entangled among deeds,  
Which, now, as infamous, I should abhor—  
Despise, as senseless: for my spirit relished  
Strangely the exasperation of that Land,  
Which turned an angry beak against the down

Of her own breast ; confounded into hope  
Of disencumbering thus her fretful wings.

But all was quieted by iron bonds  
Of military sway. The shifting aims,  
The moral interests, the creative might,  
The varied functions and high attributes  
Of civil action, yielded to a power  
Formal, and odious, and contemptible.  
—In Britain, ruled a panic dread of change ;  
The weak were praised, rewarded, and advanced ;  
And, from the impulse of a just disdain,  
Once more did I retire into myself.  
There feeling no contentment, I resolved  
To fly, for safeguard, to some foreign shore,  
Remote from Europe ; from her blasted hopes  
Her fields of carnage, and polluted air.

Fresh blew the wind, when o'er the Atlantic Main  
The ship went gliding with her thoughtless crew ;  
And who among them but an Exile, freed  
From discontent, indifferent, pleased to sit  
Among the busily-employed, not more  
With obligation charged, with service taxed,  
Than the loose pendant—to the idle wind  
Upon the tall mast streaming. But, ye Powers  
Of soul and sense mysteriously allied,  
Oh, never let the Wretched, if a choice  
Be left him, trust the freight of his distress  
To a long voyage on the silent deep !  
For, like a plague, will memory break out ;  
And, in the blank and solitude of things,  
Upon his spirit, with a fever's strength,  
Will conscience prey.—Feebly must they have felt  
Who, in old time, attired with snakes and whips  
The vengeful Furies. *Beautiful* regards  
Were turned on me—the face of her I loved ;  
The Wife and Mother pitifully fixing  
Tender reproaches, insupportable !  
Where now that boasted liberty ? No welcome  
From unknown objects I received ; and those,  
Known and familiar, which the vaulted sky  
Did, in the placid clearness of the night,  
Disclose, had accusations to prefer  
Against my peace. Within the cabin stood

That volume—as a compass for the soul—  
Revered among the nations. I implored  
Its guidance; but the infallible support  
Of faith was wanting. Tell me, why refused  
To One by storms annoyed and adverse winds;  
Perplexed with currents; of his weakness sick;  
Of vain endeavours tired; and by his own,  
And by his nature's, ignorance, dismayed!

Long-wished-for sight, the Western World appeared;  
And, when the ship was moored, I leaped ashore  
Indignantly—resolved to be a man,  
Who, having o'er the past no power, would live  
No longer in subjection to the past,  
With abject mind—from a tyrannic lord  
Inviting penance, fruitlessly endured:  
So, like a fugitive, whose feet have cleared  
Some boundary, which his followers may not cross  
In prosecution of their deadly chase,  
Respiring I looked round.—How bright the sun,  
The breeze how soft! Can anything produced  
In the old World compare, thought I, for power  
And majesty with this gigantic stream,  
Sprung from the desert? And behold a city  
Fresh, youthful, and aspiring! What are these  
To me, or I to them? As much at least  
As he desires that they should be, whom winds  
And waves have wafted to this distant shore,  
In the condition of a damaged seed,  
Whose fibres cannot, if they would, take root.  
Here may I roam at large;—my business is,  
Roaming at large, to observe, and not to feel,  
And, therefore, not to act—convinced that all  
Which bears the name of action, howsoe'er  
Beginning, ends in servitude—still painful,  
And mostly profitless. And, sooth to say,  
On nearer view, a motley spectacle  
Appeared, of high pretensions,—unreproved  
But by the obstreperous voice of higher still;  
Big passions strutting on a petty stage;  
Which a detached spectator may regard  
Not unamused.—But ridicule demands  
Quick change of objects; and, to laugh alone,  
At a composing distance from the haunts  
Of strife and folly, though it be a treat

As choice as musing Leisure can bestow ;  
 Yet, in the very centre of the crowd,  
 To keep the secret of a poignant scorn,  
 Howe'er to airy Demons suitable,  
 Of all unsocial courses, is least fit  
 For the gross spirit of mankind,—the one  
 That soonest fails to please, and quickliest turns  
 Into vexation.

Let us, then, I said,  
 Leave this unknit Republic to the scourge  
 Of her own passions ; and to regions haste,  
 Whose shades have never felt the encroaching axe,  
 Or soil endured a transfer in the mart  
 Of dire rapacity. There, Man abides,  
 Primeval Nature's child. A creature weak  
 In combination, (wherefore else driven back  
 So far, and of his old inheritance  
 So easily deprived ?) but, for that cause,  
 More dignified, and stronger in himself ;  
 Whether to act, judge, suffer, or enjoy.  
 True, the intelligence of social art  
 Hath overpowered his forefathers, and soon  
 Will sweep the remnant of his line away ;  
 But contemplations, worthier, nobler far  
 Than her destructive energies, attend  
 His independence, when along the side  
 Of Mississippi, or that northern stream  
 That spreads into successive seas, he walks ;  
 Pleased to perceive his own unshackled life,  
 And his innate capacities of soul,  
 There imaged : or when, having gained the top  
 Of some commanding eminence, which yet  
 Intruder ne'er beheld, he thence surveys  
 Regions of wood and wide savannah, vast  
 Expanse of unappropriated earth,  
 With mind that sheds a light on what he sees ;  
 Free as the sun, and lonely as the sun,  
 Pouring above his head its radiance down  
 Upon a living and rejoicing world !

So, westward, tow'rd the unviolated woods  
 I bent my way ; and, roaming far and wide,  
 Failed not to greet the merry Mocking-bird ;  
 And, while the melancholy Muccawiss  
 (The sportive bird's companion in the grove)

Repeated, o'er and o'er, his plaintive cry,  
I sympathised at leisure with the sound ;  
But that pure archetype of human greatness,  
I found him not. There, in his stead, appeared  
A creature, squalid, vengeful, and impure ;  
Remorseless, and submissive to no law  
But superstitious fear, and abject sloth.

Enough is told ! Here am I—ye have heard  
What evidence I seek, and vainly seek ;  
What from my fellow-beings I require,  
And either they have not to give, or I  
Lack virtue to receive ; what I myself,  
Too oft by wilful forfeiture, have lost  
Nor can regain. How languidly I look  
Upon this visible fabric of the world,  
May be divined—perhaps it hath been said :—  
But spare your pity, if there be in me  
Aught that deserves respect : for I exist,  
Within myself, not comfortless.—The tenor  
Which my life holds, he readily may conceive  
Whoe'er hath stood to watch a mountain brook  
In some still passage of its course, and seen,  
Within the depths of its capacious breast,  
Inverted trees, rocks, clouds, and azure sky ;  
And, on its glassy surface, specks of foam,  
And conglobated bubbles undissolved,  
Numerous as stars ; that, by their onward lapse,  
Betray to sight the motion of the stream,  
Else imperceptible. Meanwhile, is heard  
A softened roar, or murmur ; and the sound  
Though soothing, and the little floating isles  
Though beautiful, are both by Nature charged  
With the same pensive office ; and make known  
Through what perplexing labyrinths, abrupt  
Precipitations, and untoward straits,  
The earth-born wanderer hath passed ; and quickly,  
That respite o'er, like traverses and toils  
Must he again encounter.—Such a stream  
Is human Life ; and so the Spirit fares  
In the best quiet to her course allowed ;  
And such is mine,—save only for a hope  
That my particular current soon will reach  
The unfathomable gulf, where all is still !"

## BOOK FOURTH

## DESPONDENCY CORRECTED

## ARGUMENT

State of feeling produced by the foregoing Narrative—A belief in a superintending Providence the only adequate support under affliction—Wanderer's ejaculation—Acknowledges the difficulty of a lively faith—Hence immoderate sorrow—Exhortations—How received—Wanderer applies his discourse to that other cause of dejection in the Solitary's mind—Disappointment from the French Revolution—States grounds of hope, and insists on the necessity of patience and fortitude with respect to the course of great revolutions—Knowledge the source of tranquillity—Rural Solitude favourable to knowledge of the inferior Creatures; Study of their habits and ways recommended; exhortation to bodily exertion and communion with Nature—Morbid Solitude pitiable—Superstition better than apathy—Apathy and destitution unknown in the infancy of society—The various modes of Religion prevented it—Illustrated in the Jewish, Persian, Babylonian, Chaldean, and Grecian modes of belief—Solitary interposes—Wanderer points out the influence of religious and imaginative feeling in the humble ranks of society, illustrated from present and past times—These principles tend to recall exploded superstitions and popery—Wanderer rebuts this charge, and contrasts the dignities of the Imagination with the presumptuous littleness of certain modern Philosophers—Recommends other lights and guides—Asserts the power of the soul to regenerate herself; Solitary asks how—Reply—Personal appeal—Exhortation to activity of body renewed—How to commune with Nature—Wanderer concludes with a legitimate union of the imagination, affections, understanding, and reason—Effect of his discourse—Evening; Return to the Cottage.

HERE closed the Tenant of that lonely vale  
His mournful narrative—commenced in pain,  
In pain commenced, and ended without peace :  
Yet tempered, not unfrequently, with strains  
Of native feeling, grateful to our minds ;  
And yielding surely some relief to his,  
While we sat listening with compassion due.  
A pause of silence followed ; then, with voice  
That did not falter though the heart was moved,  
The Wanderer said :—

“ One adequate support  
For the calamities of mortal life  
Exists—one only ; an assured belief  
That the procession of our fate, how'er  
Sad or disturbed, is ordered by a Being  
Of infinite benevolence and power ;

Whose everlasting purposes embrace  
All accidents, converting them to good.  
—The darts of anguish fix not where the seat  
Of suffering hath been thoroughly fortified  
By acquiescence in the Will supreme  
For time and for eternity ; by faith,  
Faith absolute in God, including hope,  
And the defence that lies in boundless love  
Of his perfections ; with habitual dread  
Of aught unworthily conceived, endured  
Impatiently, ill-done, or left undone,  
To the dishonour of his holy name.  
Soul of our Souls, and safeguard of the world !  
Sustain, thou only canst, the sick of heart ;  
Restore their languid spirits, and recall  
Their lost affections unto thee and thine ! ”

Then, as we issued from that covert nook,  
He thus continued, lifting up his eyes  
To heaven : — “ How beautiful this dome of sky ;  
And the vast hills, in fluctuation fixed  
At thy command, how awful ! Shall the Soul,  
Human and rational, report of thee  
Even less than these ? — Be mute who will, who can,  
Yet I will praise thee with impassioned voice :  
My lips, that may forget thee in the crowd,  
Cannot forget thee here ; where thou hast built,  
For thy own glory, in the wilderness !  
Me didst thou constitute a priest of thine,  
In such a temple as we now behold  
Reared for thy presence : therefore, am I bound  
To worship, here, and everywhere — as one  
Not doomed to ignorance, though forced to tread,  
From childhood up, the ways of poverty ;  
From unreflecting ignorance preserved,  
And from debasement rescued. — By thy grace  
The particle divine remained unquenched ;  
And, ’mid the wild weeds of a rugged soil,  
Thy bounty caused to flourish deathless flowers,  
From paradise transplanted : wintry age  
Impends ; the frost will gather round my heart ;  
If the flowers wither, I am worse than dead !  
— Come, labour, when the worn-out frame requires  
Perpetual sabbath ; come, disease and want ;  
And sad exclusion through decay of sense ;

But leave me unabated trust in thee—  
 And let thy favour, to the end of life,  
 Inspire me with ability to seek  
 Repose and hope among eternal things—  
 Father of heaven and earth ! and I am rich,  
 And will possess my portion in content !

And what are things eternal?—powers depart,"  
 The grey-haired Wanderer stedfastly replied,  
 Answering the question which himself had asked,  
 "Possessions vanish, and opinions change,  
 And passions hold a fluctuating seat :  
 But, by the storms of circumstance unshaken,  
 And subject neither to eclipse nor wane,  
 Duty exists ;—immutably survive,  
 For our support, the measures and the forms,  
 Which an abstract intelligence supplies ;  
 Whose kingdom is, where time and space are not.  
 Of other converse which mind, soul, and heart,  
 Do, with united urgency, require,  
 What more that may not perish?—Thou, dread source,  
 Prime, self-existing cause and end of all  
 That in the scale of being fill their place ;  
 Above our human region, or below,  
 Set and sustained ;—thou, who didst wrap the cloud  
 Of infancy around us, that thyself,  
 Therein, with our simplicity awhile  
 Might'st hold, on earth, communion undisturbed ;  
 Who from the anarchy of dreaming sleep,  
 Or from its death-like void, with punctual care,  
 And touch as gentle as the morning light,  
 Restor'st us, daily, to the powers of sense  
 And reason's stedfast rule—thou, thou alone  
 Art everlasting, and the blessed Spirits,  
 Which thou includest, as the sea her waves :  
 For adoration thou endur'st ; endure  
 For consciousness the motions of thy will ;  
 For apprehension those transcendent truths  
 Of the pure intellect, that stand as laws  
 (Submission constituting strength and power)  
 Even to thy Being's infinite majesty !  
 This universe shall pass away—a work  
 Glorious ! because the shadow of thy might,  
 A step, or link, for intercourse with thee.  
 Ah ! if the time must come, in which my feet

No more shall stray where meditation leads,  
By flowing stream, through wood, or craggy wild,  
Loved haunts like these ; the unimprisoned Mind  
May yet have scope to range among her own,  
Her thoughts, her images, her high desires.  
If the dear faculty of sight should fail,  
Still, it may be allowed me to remember  
What visionary powers of eye and soul  
In youth were mine ; when, stationed on the top  
Of some huge hill—expectant, I beheld  
The sun rise up, from distant climes returned  
Darkness to chase, and sleep ; and bring the day  
His bounteous gift ! or saw him toward the deep  
Sink, with a retinue of flaming clouds  
Attended ; then, my spirit was entranced  
With joy exalted to beatitude ;  
The measure of my soul was filled with bliss,  
And holiest love ; as earth, sea, air, with light,  
With pomp, with glory, with magnificence !

Those fervent raptures are for ever flown ;  
And, since their date, my soul hath undergone  
Change manifold, for better or for worse :  
Yet cease I not to struggle, and aspire  
Heavenward ; and chide the part of me that flags,  
Through sinful choice ; or dread necessity  
On human nature from above imposed.  
'Tis, by comparison, an easy task  
Earth to despise ; but, to converse with heaven—  
This is not easy :—to relinquish all  
We have, or hope, of happiness and joy,  
And stand in freedom loosened from this world,  
I deem not arduous ; but must needs confess  
That 'tis a thing impossible to frame  
Conceptions equal to the soul's desires ;  
And the most difficult of tasks to *keep*  
Heights which the soul is competent to gain.  
—Man is of dust : ethereal hopes are his,  
Which, when they should sustain themselves aloft,  
Want due consistence ; like a pillar of smoke,  
That with majestic energy from earth  
Rises ; but, having reached the thinner air,  
Melts, and dissolves, and is no longer seen.  
From this infirmity of mortal kind  
Sorrow proceeds, which else were not ; at least,

If grief be something hallowed and ordained,  
If, in proportion, it be just and meet,  
Yet, through this weakness of the general heart,  
Is it enabled to maintain its hold  
In that excess which conscience disapproves.  
For who could sink and settle to that point  
Of selfishness ; so senseless who could be  
As long and perseveringly to mourn  
For any object of his love, removed  
From this unstable world, if he could fix  
A satisfying view upon that state  
Of pure, imperishable, blessedness,  
Which reason promises, and holy writ  
Ensures to all believers ?—Yet mistrust  
Is of such incapacity, methinks,  
No natural branch ; despondency far less ;  
And, least of all, is absolute despair.  
—And, if there be whose tender frames have drooped  
Even to the dust ; apparently, through weight  
Of anguish unrelieved, and lack of power  
An agonizing sorrow to transmute ;  
Deem not that proof is here of hope withheld  
When wanted most ; a confidence impaired  
So pitifully, that, having ceased to see  
With bodily eyes, they are borne down by love  
Of what is lost, and perish through regret.  
Oh ! no, the innocent Sufferer often sees  
Too clearly ; feels too vividly ; and longs  
To realize the vision, with intense  
And over-constant yearning ;—there—there lies  
The excess, by which the balance is destroyed.  
Too, too contracted are these walls of flesh,  
This vital warmth too cold, these visual orbs,  
Though inconceivably endowed, too dim  
For any passion of the soul that leads  
To ecstasy ; and, all the crooked paths  
Of time and change disdaining, takes its course  
Along the line of limitless desires.  
I, speaking now from such disorder free,  
Nor rapt, nor craving, but in settled peace,  
I cannot doubt that they whom you deplore  
Are glorified ; or, if they sleep, shall wake  
From sleep, and dwell with God in endless love.  
Hope, below this, consists not with belief  
In mercy, carried infinite degrees

Beyond the tenderness of human hearts :  
Hope, below this, consists not with belief  
In perfect wisdom, guiding mightiest power,  
That finds no limits but her own pure will.

Here then we rest ; not fearing for our creed  
The worst that human reasoning can achieve,  
To unsettle or perplex it : yet with pain  
Acknowledging, and grievous self-reproach,  
That, though immovably convinced, we want  
Zeal, and the virtue to exist by faith  
As soldiers live by courage ; as, by strength  
Of heart, the sailor fights with roaring seas.  
Alas ! the endowment of immortal power  
Is matched unequally with custom, time,  
And domineering faculties of sense  
In *all* ; in most, with superadded foes,  
Idle temptations ; open vanities,  
Ephemeral offspring of the unblushing world ;  
And, in the private regions of the mind,  
Ill-governed passions, ranklings of despite,  
Immoderate wishes, pining discontent,  
Distress and care. What then remains ?—To seek  
Those helps for his occasions ever near  
Who lacks not will to use them ; vows, renewed  
On the first motion of a holy thought ;  
Vigils of contemplation ; praise ; and prayer—  
A stream, which, from the fountain of the heart  
Issuing, however feebly, nowhere flows  
Without access of unexpected strength.  
But, above all, the victory is most sure  
For him, who, seeking faith by virtue, strives  
To yield entire submission to the law  
Of conscience—conscience revered and obeyed,  
As God's most intimate presence in the soul,  
And his most perfect image in the world.  
—Endeavour thus to live ; these rules regard ;  
These helps solicit ; and a stedfast seat  
Shall then be yours among the happy few  
Who dwell on earth, yet breathe empyreal air,  
Sons of the morning. For your nobler part,  
Ere disencumbered of her mortal chains,  
Doubt shall be quelled and trouble chased away ;  
With only such degree of sadness left  
As may support longings of pure desire ;

And strengthen love, rejoicing secretly  
In the sublime attractions of the grave."

While, in this strain, the venerable Sage  
Poured forth his aspirations, and announced  
His judgments, near that lonely house we paced  
A plot of greensward, seemingly preserved  
By nature's care from wreck of scattered stones,  
And from encroachment of encircling heath :  
Small space ! but, for reiterated steps,  
Smooth and commodious ; as a stately deck  
Which to and fro the mariner is used  
To tread for pastime, talking with his mates,  
Or haply thinking of far-distant friends,  
While the ship glides before a steady breeze,  
Stillness prevailed around us : and the voice  
That spake was capable to lift the soul  
Toward regions yet more tranquil. But, methought,  
That he, whose fixed despondency had given  
Impulse and motive to that strong discourse,  
Was less upraised in spirit than abashed ;  
*Shrinking from admonition, like a man*  
Who feels that to exhort is to reproach.  
Yet not to be diverted from his aim,  
The Sage continued :—

"For that other loss,  
The loss of confidence in social man,  
By the unexpected transports of our age  
Carried so high, that every thought, which looked  
Beyond the temporal destiny of the Kind,  
To many seemed superfluous—as, no cause  
Could e'er for such exalted confidence  
Exist ; so, none is now for fixed despair :  
The two extremes are equally disowned  
By reason : if, with sharp recoil, from one  
You have been driven far as its opposite,  
Between them seek the point whereon to build  
Sound expectations. So doth he advise  
Who shared at first the illusion ; but was soon  
Cast from the pedestal of pride by shocks  
Which Nature gently gave, in woods and fields ;  
Nor unreprieved by Providence, thus speaking  
To the inattentive children of the world :  
'Vainglorious Generation ! what new powers  
'On you have been conferred ? what gifts, withheld

'From your progenitors, have ye received,  
'Fit recompense of new desert? what claim  
'Are ye prepared to urge, that my decrees  
'For you should undergo a sudden change;  
'And the weak functions of one busy day,  
'Reclaiming and extirpating, perform  
'What all the slowly-moving years of time,  
'With their united force, have left undone?  
'By nature's gradual processes be taught;  
'By story be confounded! Ye aspire  
'Rashly, to fall once more; and that false fruit,  
'Which, to your overweening spirits, yields  
'Hope of a flight celestial, will produce  
'Misery and shame. But Wisdom of her sons  
'Shall not the less, though late, be justified.'

Such timely warning," said the Wanderer, "gave  
That visionary voice; and, at this day,  
When a Tartarean darkness overspreads  
The groaning nations; when the impious rule,  
By will or by established ordinance,  
Their own dire agents, and constrain the good  
To acts which they abhor; though I bewail  
This triumph, yet the pity of my heart  
Prevents me not from owning, that the law,  
By which mankind now suffers, is most just.  
For by superior energies; more strict  
Affiance in each other; faith more firm  
In their unhallowed principles; the bad  
Have fairly earned a victory o'er the weak,  
The vacillating, inconsistent good.  
Therefore, not unconsolated, I wait—in hope  
To see the moment, when the righteous cause  
Shall gain defenders zealous and devout  
As they who have opposed her; in which Virtue  
Will, to her efforts, tolerate no bounds  
That are not lofty as her rights; aspiring  
By impulse of her own ethereal zeal.  
That spirit only can redeem mankind;  
And when that sacred spirit shall appear,  
Then shall *our* triumph be complete as theirs.  
Yet, should this confidence prove vain, the wise  
Have still the keeping of their proper peace;  
Are guardians of their own tranquillity.  
They act, or they recede, observe, and feel;

'Knowing the heart of man is set to be  
 The centre of this world, about the which  
 Those revolutions of disturbances  
 Still roll ; where all the aspects of misery  
 Predominate ; whose strong effects are such  
 As he must bear, being powerless to redress ;  
*And that unless above himself he can  
 Erect himself, how poor a thing is Man !*'<sup>1</sup>

Happy is he who lives to understand,  
 Not human nature only, but explores  
 All natures,—to the end that he may find  
 The law that governs each ; and where begins  
 The union, the partition where, that makes  
 Kind and degree, among all visible Beings ;  
 The constitutions, powers, and faculties,  
 Which they inherit,—cannot step beyond,—  
 And cannot fall beneath ; that do assign  
 To every class its station and its office,  
 Through all the mighty commonwealth of things  
 Up from the creeping plant to sovereign Man.  
 Such converse, if directed by a meek,  
 Sincere, and humble spirit, teaches love :  
 For knowledge is delight ; and such delight  
 Breeds love : yet, suited as it rather is  
 To thought and to the climbing intellect,  
 It teaches less to love, than to adore ;  
 If that be not indeed the highest love !"

"Yet," said I, tempted here to interpose,  
 "The dignity of life is not impaired  
 By aught that innocently satisfies  
 The humbler cravings of the heart ; and he  
 Is a still happier man, who, for those heights  
 Of speculation not unfit, descends ;  
 And such benign affections cultivates  
 Among the inferior kinds ; not merely those  
 That he may call his own, and which depend,  
 As individual objects of regard,  
 Upon his care, from whom he also looks  
 For signs and tokens of a mutual bond ;  
 But others, far beyond this narrow sphere,  
 Whom, for the very sake of love, he loves.  
 Nor is it a mean praise of rural life

<sup>1</sup> Daniel.

And solitude, that they do favour most,  
Most frequently call forth, and best sustain,  
These pure sensations ; that can penetrate  
The obstreperous city ; on the barren seas  
Are not unfelt ; and much might recommend,  
How much they might inspirit and endear,  
The loneliness of this sublime retreat ! ”

“ Yes,” said the Sage, resuming the discourse  
Again directed to his downcast Friend,  
“ If, with the froward will and grovelling soul  
Of man, offended, liberty is here,  
And invitation every hour renewed,  
To mark *their* placid state, who never heard  
Of a command which they have power to break,  
Or rule which they are tempted to transgress :  
These, with a soothed or elevated heart,  
May we behold ; their knowledge register ;  
Observe their ways ; and, free from envy, find  
Complacence there :—but wherefore this to you ?  
I guess that, welcome to your lonely hearth,  
The redbreast, ruffled up by winter’s cold  
Into a ‘ feathery bunch,’ feeds at your hand :  
A box, perchance, is from your casement hung  
For the small wren to build in ;—not in vain,  
The barriers disregarding that surround  
This deep abiding place, before your sight  
Mounts on the breeze the butterfly ; and soars,  
Small creature as she is, from earth’s bright flowers,  
Into the dewy clouds. Ambition reigns  
In the waste wilderness : the Soul ascends  
Drawn towards her native firmament of heaven,  
When the fresh eagle, in the month of May,  
Upborne, at evening, on replenished wing,  
This shaded valley leaves ; and leaves the dark  
Empurpled hills, conspicuously renewing  
A proud communication with the sun  
Low sunk beneath the horizon !—List !—I heard,  
From yon huge breast of rock, a voice sent forth  
As if the visible mountain made the cry.  
Again ! ”—The effect upon the soul was such  
As he expressed : from out the mountain’s heart  
The solemn voice appeared to issue, startling  
The blank air—for the region all around  
Stood empty of all shape of life, and silent

Save for that single cry, the unanswered bleat  
 Of a poor lamb—left somewhere to itself,  
 The plaintive spirit of the solitude !  
 He paused, as if unwilling to proceed,  
 Through consciousness that silence in such place  
 Was best, the most affecting eloquence.  
 But soon his thoughts returned upon themselves,  
 And, in soft tone of speech, thus he resumed.

“ Ah ! if the heart, too confidently raised,  
 Perchance too lightly occupied, or lulled  
 Too easily, despise or overlook  
 The vassalage that binds her to the earth,  
 Her sad dependence upon time, and all  
 The trepidations of mortality,  
 What place so destitute and void—but there  
 The little flower her vanity shall check ;  
 The trailing worm reprove her thoughtless pride ?

These craggy regions, these chaotic wilds,  
 Does that benignity pervade, that warms  
 The mole contented with her darksome walk  
 In the cold ground ; and to the emmet gives  
 Her foresight, and intelligence that makes  
 The tiny creatures strong by social league ;  
 Supports the generations, multiplies  
 Their tribes, till we behold a spacious plain  
 Or grassy bottom, all, with little hills—  
 Their labour, covered, as a lake with waves ;  
 Thousands of cities, in the desert place  
 Built up of life, and food, and means of life !  
 Nor wanting here, to entertain the thought,  
 Creatures that in communities exist,  
 Less, as might seem, for general guardianship  
 Or through dependence upon mutual aid,  
 Than by participation of delight  
 And a strict love of fellowship, combined.  
 What other spirit can it be that prompts  
 The gilded summer flies to mix and weave  
 Their sports together in the solar beam,  
 Or in the gloom of twilight hum their joy ?  
 More obviously the self-same influence rules  
 The feathered kinds ; the fieldfare's pensive flock,  
 The cawing rooks, and sea-mews from afar,  
 Hovering above these inland solitudes,  
 By the rough wind unscattered, at whose call

Up through the trenches of the long-drawn vales  
Their voyage was begun : nor is its power  
Unfelt among the sedentary fowl  
That seek yon pool, and there prolong their stay  
In silent congress ; or together roused  
Take flight ; while with their clang the air resounds :  
And, over all, in that ethereal vault,  
Is the mute company of changeful clouds ;  
Bright apparition, suddenly put forth,  
The rainbow smiling on the faded storm ;  
The mild assemblage of the starry heavens ;  
And the great sun, earth's universal lord !

How bountiful is Nature ! he shall find  
Who seeks not ; and to him, who hath not asked,  
Large measure shall be dealt. Three sabbath-days  
Are scarcely told, since, on a service bent  
Of mere humanity, you clomb those heights ;  
And what a marvellous and heavenly show  
Was suddenly revealed !—the swains moved on,  
And heeded not : you lingered, you perceived  
And felt, deeply as living man could feel.  
There is a luxury in self-dispraise ;  
And inward self-disparagement affords  
To meditative spleen a grateful feast.  
Trust me, pronouncing on your own desert,  
You judge unthankfully : distempered nerves  
Infect the thoughts : the languor of the frame  
Depresses the soul's vigour. Quit your couch—  
Cleave not so fondly to your moody cell ;  
Nor let the hallowed powers, that shed from heaven  
Stillness and rest, with disapproving eye  
Look down upon your taper, through a watch  
Of midnight hours, unseasonably twinkling  
In this deep Hollow, like a sullen star  
Dimly reflected in a lonely pool.  
Take courage, and withdraw yourself from ways  
That run not parallel to nature's course.  
Rise with the lark ! your matins shall obtain  
Grace, be their composition what it may,  
If but with hers performed ; climb once again,  
Climb every day, those ramparts ; meet the breeze  
Upon their tops, adventurous as a bee  
That from your garden thither soars, to feed  
On new-blown heath ; let yon commanding rock

Be your frequented watch-tower ; roll the stone  
 In thunder down the mountains ; with all your might  
 Chase the wild goat ; and if the bold red deer  
 Fly to those harbours, driven by hound and horn  
 Loud echoing, add your speed to the pursuit ;  
 So, wearied to your hut shall you return,  
 And sink at evening into sound repose."

The Solitary lifted toward the hills  
 A kindling eye :—accordant feelings rushed  
 Into my bosom, whence these words broke forth :  
 " Oh ! what a joy it were, in vigorous health,  
 To have a body (this our vital frame  
 With shrinking sensibility endued,  
 And all the nice regards of flesh and blood)  
 And to the elements surrender it  
 As if it were a spirit !—How divine,  
 The liberty, for frail, for mortal, man  
 To roam at large among unpeopled glens  
 And mountainous retirements, only trod  
 By devious footsteps ; regions consecrate  
 To oldest time ! and, reckless of the storm  
 That keeps the raven quiet in her nest,  
 Be as a presence or a motion—one  
 Among the many there ; and while the mists  
 Flying, and rainy vapours, call out shapes  
 And phantoms from the crags and solid earth  
 As fast as a musician scatters sounds  
 Out of an instrument ; and while the streams  
 (As at a first creation and in haste  
 To exercise their untried faculties)  
 Descending from the region of the clouds,  
 And starting from the hollows of the earth  
 More multitudinous every moment, rend  
 Their way before them—what a joy to roam  
 An equal among mightiest energies ;  
 And haply sometimes with articulate voice,  
 Amid the deafening tumult, scarcely heard  
 By him that utters it, exclaim aloud,  
 ' Rage on, ye elements ! let moon and stars  
 Their aspects lend, and mingle in their turn  
 With this commotion (ruinous though it be)  
 From day to night, from night to day, prolonged !'"

" Yes," said the Wanderer, taking from my lips  
 The strain of transport, " whosoe'er in youth

Has, through ambition of his soul, given way  
To such desires, and grasped at such delight,  
Shall feel congenial stirrings late and long,  
In spite of all the weakness that life brings,  
Its cares and sorrows ; he, though taught to own  
The tranquillising power of time, shall wake,  
Wake sometimes to a noble restlessness—  
Loving the sports which once he gloried in.

Compatriot, Friend, remote are Garry's hills,  
The streams far distant of your native glen ;  
Yet is their form and image here expressed  
With brotherly resemblance. Turn your steps  
Wherever fancy leads ; by day, by night,  
Are various engines working, not the same  
As those with which your soul in youth was moved,  
But by the great Artificer endowed  
With no inferior power. You dwell alone ;  
You walk, you live, you speculate alone ;  
Yet doth remembrance, like a sovereign prince,  
For you a stately gallery maintain  
Of gay or tragic pictures. You have seen,  
Have acted, suffered, travelled far, observed  
With no incurious eye ; and books are yours,  
Within whose silent chambers treasure lies  
Preserved from age to age ; more precious far  
Than that accumulated store of gold  
And orient gems, which, for a day of need,  
The Sultan hides deep in ancestral tombs.  
These hoards of truth you can unlock at will :  
And music waits upon your skilful touch,  
Sounds which the wandering shepherd from these heights  
Hears, and forgets his purpose ; furnished thus,  
How can you droop, if willing to be upraised ?

A piteous lot it were to flee from Man—  
Yet not rejoice in Nature. He, whose hours  
Are by domestic pleasures uncaressed  
And unenlivened ; who exists whole years  
Apart from benefits received or done  
Mid the transactions of the bustling crowd ;  
Who neither hears, nor feels a wish to hear,  
Of the world's interests—such a one hath need  
Of a quick fancy, and an active heart,  
That, for the day's consumption, books may yield

Food not unwholesome ; earth and air correct  
 His morbid humour, with delight supplied  
 Or solace, varying as the seasons change.  
 —Truth has her pleasure-grounds, her haunts of ease  
 And easy contemplation ; gay parterres,  
 And labyrinthine walks, her sunny glades  
 And shady groves in studied contrast—each,  
 For recreation, leading into each :  
 These may be range, if willing to partake  
 Their soft indulgences, and in due time  
 May issue thence, recruited for the tasks  
 And course of service Truth requires from those  
 Who tend her altars, wait upon her throne,  
 And guard her fortresses. Who thinks, and feels,  
 And recognises ever and anon  
 The breeze of nature stirring in his soul,  
 Why need such man go desperately astray,  
 And nurse 'the dreadful appetite of death' ?  
 If tired with systems, each in its degree  
 Substantial, and all crumbling in their turn,  
 Let him build systems of his own, and smile  
 At the fond work, demolished with a touch ;  
 If unreligious, let him be at once,  
 Among ten thousand innocents, enrolled  
 A pupil in the many-chambered school,  
 Where superstition weaves her airy dreams.

Life's autumn past, I stand on winter's verge ;  
 And daily lose what I desire to keep :  
 Yet rather would I instantly decline  
 To the traditionary sympathies  
 Of a most rustic ignorance, and take  
 A fearful apprehension from the owl  
 Or death-watch : and as readily rejoice,  
 If two auspicious magpies crossed my way ;—  
 To this would rather bend than see and hear  
 The repetitions wearisome of sense,  
 Where soul is dead, and feeling hath no place ;  
 Where knowledge, ill begun in cold remark  
 On outward things, with formal inference ends ;  
 Or, if the mind turn inward, she recoils  
 At once—or, not recoiling, is perplexed—  
 Lost in a gloom of uninspired research ;  
 Meanwhile, the heart within the heart, the seat  
 Where peace and happy consciousness should dwell,

On its own axis restlessly revolving,  
Seeks, yet can nowhere find, the light of truth.

Upon the breast of new-created earth  
Man walked ; and when and wheresoe'er he moved,  
Alone or mated, solitude was not.  
He heard, borne on the wind, the articulate voice  
Of God ; and Angels to his sight appeared  
Crowning the glorious hills of paradise ;  
Or through the groves gliding like morning mist  
Enkindled by the sun. He sate—and talked  
With winged Messengers ; who daily brought  
To his small island in the ethereal deep  
Tidings of joy and love.—From those pure heights  
(Whether of actual vision, sensible  
To sight and feeling, or that in this sort  
Have condescendingly been shadowed forth  
Communications spiritually maintained,  
And intuitions moral and divine)  
Fell Human-kind—to banishment condemned  
That flowing years repealed not : and distress  
And grief spread wide ; but Man escaped the doom  
Of destitution ;—solitude was not.  
—Jehovah—shapeless Power above all Powers,  
Single and one, the omnipresent God,  
By vocal utterance, or blaze of light,  
Or cloud of darkness, localised in heaven ;  
On earth, enshrined within the wandering ark ;  
Or, out of Sion, thundering from his throne  
Between the Cherubim—on the chosen Race  
Showered miracles, and ceased not to dispense  
Judgments, that filled the land from age to age  
With hope, and love, and gratitude, and fear ;  
And with amazement smote ;—thereby to assert  
His scorned, or unacknowledged, sovereignty.  
And when the One, ineffable of name,  
Of nature indivisible, withdrew  
From mortal adoration or regard,  
Not then was Deity engulfed ; nor Man,  
The rational creature, left, to feel the weight  
Of his own reason, without sense or thought  
Of higher reason and a purer will,  
To benefit and bless, through mightier power :—  
Whether the Persian—zealous to reject  
Altar and image, and the inclusive walls

And roofs of temples built by human hands—  
To loftiest heights ascending, from their tops,  
With myrtle-wreathed tiara on his brow,  
Presented sacrifice to moon and stars,  
And to the winds and mother elements,  
And the whole circle of the heavens, for him  
A sensitive existence, and a God,  
With lifted hands invoked, and songs of praise :  
Or, less reluctantly to bonds of sense  
Yielding his soul, the Babylonian framed  
For influence undefined a personal shape ;  
And, from the plain, with toil immense, upreared  
Tower eight times planted on the top of tower,  
That Belus, nightly to his splendid couch  
Descending, there might rest ; upon that height  
Pure and serene, diffused—to overlook  
Winding Euphrates, and the city vast  
Of his devoted worshippers, far-stretched,  
With grove and field and garden interspersed ;  
Their town, and foodful region for support  
Against the pressure of beleaguering war.

Chaldean shepherds, ranging trackless fields,  
Beneath the concave of unclouded skies  
Spread like a sea, in boundless solitude,  
Looked on the polar star, as on a guide  
And guardian of their course, that never closed  
His stedfast eye. The planetary Five  
With a submissive reverence they beheld ;  
Watched, from the centre of their sleeping flocks,  
Those radiant Mercuries, that seemed to move  
Carrying through ether, in perpetual round,  
Decrees and resolutions of the Gods ;  
And, by their aspects, signifying works  
Of dim futurity, to Man revealed.  
—The imaginative faculty was lord  
Of observations natural ; and, thus  
Led on, those shepherds made report of stars  
In set rotation passing to and fro,  
Between the orbs of our apparent sphere  
And its invisible counterpart, adorned  
With answering constellations, under earth,  
Removed from all approach of living sight  
But present to the dead ; who, so they deemed,  
Like those celestial messengers beheld  
All accidents, and judges were of all.

The lively Grecian, in a land of hills,  
Rivers and fertile plains, and sounding shores,—  
Under a cope of sky more variable,  
Could find commodious place for every God,  
Promptly received, as prodigally brought,  
From the surrounding countries, at the choice  
Of all adventurers. With unrivalled skill,  
As nicest observation furnished hints  
For studious fancy, his quick hand bestowed  
On fluent operations a fixed shape ;  
Metal or stone, idolatrously served.  
And yet—triumphant o'er this pompous show  
Of art, this palpable array of sense,  
On every side encountered ; in despite  
Of the gross fictions chanted in the streets  
By wandering Rhapsodists ; and in contempt  
Of doubt and bold denial hourly urged  
Amid the wrangling schools—a SPIRIT hung,  
Beautiful region ! o'er thy towns and farms,  
Statues and temples, and memorial tombs !  
And emanations were perceived ; and acts  
Of immortality, in Nature's course,  
Exemplified by mysteries, that were felt  
As bonds, on grave philosopher imposed  
And armed warrior ; and in every grove  
A gay or pensive tenderness prevailed,  
When piety more awlul had relaxed.  
—' Take, running river, take these locks of mine '—  
Thus would the Votary say—' this severed hair,  
' My vow fulfilling, do I here present,  
' Thankful for my beloved child's return.  
' Thy banks, Cephissus, he again hath trod,  
' Thy murmurs heard ; and drunk the crystal lymph  
' With which thou dost refresh the thirsty lip,  
' And, all day long, moisten these flowery fields !'  
And doubtless, sometimes, when the hair was shed  
Upon the flowing stream, a thought arose  
Of Life continuous, Being unimpaired ;  
That hath been, is, and where it was and is  
There shall endure,—existence unexposed  
To the blind walk of mortal accident ;  
From diminution safe and weakening age ;  
While man grows old, and dwindles, and decays ;  
And countless generations of mankind  
Depart ; and leave no vestige where they trod.

We live by Admiration, Hope, and Love ;  
 And, even as these are well and wisely fixed,  
 In dignity of being we ascend.  
 But what is error ?"—" Answer he who can !"  
 The Sceptic somewhat haughtily exclaimed :  
 " Love, Hope, and Admiration,—are they not  
 Mad Fancy's favourite vassals ? Does not life  
 Use them, full oft, as pioneers to ruin,  
 Guides to destruction ? Is it well to trust  
 Imagination's light when reason's fails,  
 The unguarded taper where the guarded faints ?  
 —Stoop from those heights, and soberly declare  
 What error is ; and, of our errors, which  
 Doth most debase the mind ; the genuine seats  
 Of power, where are they ? Who shall regulate,  
 With truth, the scale of intellectual rank ?"

" Methinks," persuasively the Sage replied,  
 " That for this arduous office you possess  
 Some rare advantages. Your early days  
 A grateful recollection must supply  
 Of much exalted good by Heaven vouchsafed  
 To dignify the humblest state.—Your voice  
 Hath, in my hearing, often testified  
 That poor men's children, they, and they alone,  
 By their condition taught, can understand  
 The wisdom of the prayer that daily asks  
 For daily bread. A consciousness is yours  
 How feelingly religion may be learned  
 In smoky cabins, from a mother's tongue—  
 Heard where the dwelling vibrates to the din  
 Of the contiguous torrent, gathering strength  
 At every moment—and, with strength, increase  
 Of fury ; or, while snow is at the door,  
 Assaulting and defending, and the wind,  
 A sightless labourer, whistles at his work—  
 Fearful ; but resignation tempers fear,  
 And piety is sweet to infant minds.  
 —The Shepherd-lad, that in the sunshine carves,  
 On the green turf, a dial—to divide  
 The silent hours ; and who to that report  
 Can portion out his pleasures, and adapt,  
 Throughout a long and lonely summer's day  
 His round of pastoral duties, is not left  
 With less intelligence for *moral* things

Of gravest import. Early he perceives,  
Within himself, a measure and a rule,  
Which to the sun of truth he can apply,  
That shines for him, and shines for all mankind.  
Experience daily fixing his regards  
On nature's wants, he knows how few they are,  
And where they lie, how answered and appeased.  
This knowledge ample recompense affords  
For manifold privations ; he refers  
His notions to this standard ; on this rock  
Rests his desires ; and hence, in after life,  
Soul-strengthening patience, and sublime content.  
Imagination—not permitted here  
To waste her powers, as in the worldling's mind,  
On fickle pleasures, and superfluous cares,  
And trivial ostentation—is left free  
And puissant to range the solemn walks  
Of time and nature, girded by a zone  
That, while it binds, invigorates and supports.  
Acknowledge, then, that whether by the side  
Of his poor hut, or on the mountain top,  
Or in the cultured field, a Man so bred  
(Take from him what you will upon the score  
Of ignorance or illusion) lives and breathes  
For noble purposes of mind : his heart  
Beats to the heroic song of ancient days ;  
His eye distinguishes, his soul creates.  
And those illusions, which excite the scorn  
Or move the pity of unthinking minds,  
Are they not mainly outward ministers  
Of inward conscience ? with whose service charged  
They came and go, appeared and disappear,  
Diverting evil purposes, remorse  
Awakening, chastening an intemperate grief,  
Or pride of heart abating : and, when'er  
For less important ends those phantoms move,  
Who would forbid them, if their presence serve—  
On thinly-peopled mountains and wild heaths,  
Filling a space, else vacant—to exalt  
The forms of Nature, and enlarge her powers ?

Once more to distant ages of the world  
Let us revert, and place before our thoughts  
The face which rural solitude might wear  
To the unenlightened swains of pagan Greece.

—In that fair clime, the lonely herdsman, stretched  
On the soft grass through half a summer's day,  
With music lulled his indolent repose :  
And, in some fit of weariness, if he,  
When his own breath was silent, chanced to hear  
A distant strain, far sweeter than the sounds  
Which his poor skill could make, his fancy fetched,  
Even from the blazing chariot of the sun,  
A beardless Youth, who touched a golden lute,  
And filled the illumined groves with ravishment.  
The nightly hunter, lifting a bright eye  
Up towards the crescent moon, with grateful heart  
Called on the lovely wanderer who bestowed  
That timely light, to share his joyous sport :  
And hence, a beaming Goddess with her Nymphs,  
Across the lawn and through the darksome grove,  
Not unaccompanied with tuneful notes  
By echo multiplied from rock or cave,  
Swept in the storm of chase ; as moon and stars  
Glance rapidly along the clouded heaven,  
When winds are blowing strong. The traveller slaked  
His thirst from rill or gushing fount, and thanked  
The Naiad. Sunbeams, upon distant hills  
Gliding apace, with shadows in their train,  
Might, with small help from fancy, be transformed  
Into fleet Oreads sporting visibly.  
The Zephyrs fanning, as they passed, their wings,  
Lacked not, for love, fair objects whom they wooed  
With gentle whisper. Withered boughs grotesque,  
Stripped of their leaves and twigs by hoary age,  
From depth of shaggy covert peeping forth  
In the low vale, or on steep mountain side ;  
And, sometimes, intermixed with stirring horns  
Of the live deer, or goat's depending beard,—  
These were the lurking Satyrs, a wild brood  
Of gamesome Deities ; or Pan himself,  
The simple shepherd's awe-inspiring God ! ”

The strain was aptly chosen ; and I could mark  
Its kindly influence, o'er the yielding brow  
Of our Companion, gradually diffused ;  
While, listening, he had paced the noiseless turf,  
Like one whose untired ear a murmuring stream  
Detains ; but tempted now to interpose,  
He with a smile exclaimed :—

" 'Tis well you speak

At a safe distance from our native land,  
And from the mansions where our youth was taught.  
The true descendants of those godly men  
Who swept from Scotland, in a flame of zeal,  
Shrine, altar, image, and the massy piles  
That harboured them,—the souls retaining yet  
The churlish features of that after-race  
Who fled to woods, caverns, and jutting rocks,  
In deadly scorn of superstitious rites,  
Or what their scruples construed to be such—  
How, think you, would they tolerate this scheme  
Of fine propensities, that tends, if urged  
Far as it might be urged, to sow afresh  
The weeds of Romish phantasy, in vain  
Uprooted; would re-consecrate our wells  
To good Saint Fillan and to fair Saint Anne;  
And from long banishment recall Saint Giles,  
To watch again with tutelary love  
O'er stately Edinburgh throned on crags?  
A blessed restoration, to behold  
The patron, on the shoulders of his priests,  
Once more parading through her crowded streets,  
Now simply guarded by the sober powers  
Of science, and philosophy, and sense!"

This answer followed.—"You have turned my thoughts  
Upon our brave Progenitors, who rose  
Against idolatry with warlike mind,  
And shrunk from vain observances, to lurk  
In woods, and dwell under impending rocks  
Ill-sheltered, and oft wanting fire and food;  
Why?—for this very reason that they felt,  
And did acknowledge, wheresoe'er they moved,  
A spiritual presence, oft-times misconceived,  
But still a high dependence, a divine  
Bounty and government, that filled their hearts  
With joy, and gratitude, and fear, and love;  
And from their fervent lips drew hymns of praise,  
That through the desert rang. Though favoured less,  
Far less, than these, yet such, in their degree,  
Were those bewildered Pagans of old time.  
Beyond their own poor natures and above  
They looked; were humbly thankful for the good  
Which the warm sun solicited, and earth

Bestowed ; were gladsome,—and their moral sense  
 They fortified with reverence for the Gods ;  
 And they had hopes that overstepped the Grave.

Now, shall our great Discoverers," he exclaimed,  
 Raising his voice triumphantly, "obtain  
 From sense and reason, less than these obtained,  
 Though far misled? Shall men for whom our age  
 Unbaffled powers of vision hath prepared,  
 To explore the world without and world within,  
 Be joyless as the blind? Ambitious spirits—  
 Whom earth, at this late season, hath produced  
 To regulate the moving spheres, and weigh  
 The planets in the hollow of their hand ;  
 And they who rather dive than soar, whose pains  
 Have solved the elements, or analysed  
 The thinking principle—shall they in fact  
 Prove a degraded Race? and what avails  
 Renown, if their presumption make them such?  
 Oh! there is laughter at their work in heaven!  
 Inquire of ancient Wisdom ; go, demand  
 Of mighty Nature, if 'twas ever meant  
 That we should pry far off yet be unraised ;  
 That we should pore, and dwindle as we pore,  
 Viewing all objects unremittingly  
 In disconnection dead and spiritless ;  
 And still dividing, and dividing still,  
 Break down all grandeur, still unsatisfied  
 With the perverse attempt, while littleness  
 May yet become more little ; waging thus  
 An impious warfare with the very life  
 Of our own souls !

And if indeed there be  
 An all-pervading Spirit, upon whom  
 Our dark foundations rest, could he design  
 That this magnificent effect of power,  
 The earth we tread, the sky that we behold  
 By day, and all the pomp which night reveals ;  
 That these—and that superior mystery  
 Our vital frame, so fearfully devised,  
 And the dread soul within it—should exist  
 Only to be examined, pondered, searched,  
 Probed, vexed, and criticised? Accuse me not  
 Of arrogance, unknown Wanderer as I am,  
 If, having walked with Nature threescore years,

And offered, far as frailty would allow,  
My heart a daily sacrifice to Truth,  
I now affirm of Nature and of Truth,  
Whom I have served, that their DIVINITY  
Revolts, offended at the ways of men  
Swayed by such motives, to such ends employed ;  
Philosophers, who, though the human soul  
Be of a thousand faculties composed,  
And twice ten thousand interests, do yet prize  
This soul, and the transcendent universe,  
No more than as a mirror that reflects  
To proud Self-love her own intelligence ;  
That one, poor, finite object, in the abyss  
Of infinite Being, twinkling restlessly !

Nor higher place can be assigned to him  
And his compeers—the laughing Sage of France.—  
Crowned was he, if my memory do not err,  
With laurel planted upon hoary hairs,  
In sign of conquest by his wit achieved  
And benefits his wisdom had conferred ;  
His stooping body tottered with wreaths of flowers  
Opprest, far less becoming ornaments  
Than Spring oft twines about a mouldering tree ;  
Yet so it pleased a fond, a vain, old Man,  
And a most frivolous people. Him I mean  
Who penned, to ridicule confiding faith,  
This sorry Legend ; which by chance we found  
Piled in a nook, through malice, as might seem,  
Among more innocent rubbish.”—Speaking thus,  
With a brief notice when, and how, and where,  
We had espied the book, he drew it forth ;  
And courteously, as if the act removed,  
At once, all traces from the good Man’s heart  
Of unbenign aversion or contempt,  
Restored it to its owner. “Gentle Friend,”  
Herewith he grasped the Solitary’s hand,  
“You have known lights and guides better than these.  
Ah ! let not aught amiss within dispose  
A noble mind to practise on herself,  
And tempt opinion to support the wrongs  
Of passion : whatsoe’er be felt or feared,  
From higher judgment-seats make no appeal  
To lower : can you question that the soul  
Inherits an allegiance, not by choice

To be cast off, upon an oath proposed  
By each new upstart notion? In the ports  
Of levity no refuge can be found,  
No shelter, for a spirit in distress.  
He, who by wilful disesteem of life  
And proud insensibility to hope,  
Affronts the eye of Solitude, shall learn  
That her mild nature can be terrible ;  
That neither she nor Silence lack the power  
To avenge their own insulted majesty.

O blest seclusion ! when the mind admits  
The law of duty ; and can therefore move  
Through each vicissitude of loss and gain,  
Linked in entire complacency with her choice ;  
When youth's presumptuousness is mellowed down,  
And manhood's vain anxiety dismissed ;  
When wisdom shows her seasonable fruit,  
Upon the boughs of sheltering leisure hung  
In sober plenty ; when the spirit stoops  
To drink with gratitude the crystal stream  
Of unreprieved enjoyment ; and is pleased  
To muse, and be saluted by the air  
Of meek repentance, wafting wall-flower scents  
From out the crumbling ruins of fallen pride  
And chambers of transgression, now forlorn.  
O, calm contented days, and peaceful nights !  
Who, when such good can be obtained, would strive  
To reconcile his manhood to a couch  
Soft, as may seem, but, under that disguise,  
Stuffed with the thorny substance of the past  
For fixed annoyance ; and full oft beset  
With floating dreams, black and disconsolate,  
The vapoury phantoms of futurity ?

Within the soul a faculty abides,  
That with interpositions, which would hide  
And darken, so can deal that they become  
Contingencies of pomp ; and serve to exalt  
Her native brightness. As the ample moon,  
In the deep stillness of a summer even  
Rising behind a thick and lofty grove,  
Burns, like an unconsuming fire of light,  
In the green trees ; and, kindling on all sides  
Their leafy umbrage, turns the dusky veil  
Into a substance glorious as her own,

Yea, with her own incorporated, by power  
Capacious and serene. Like power abides  
In man's celestial spirit; virtue thus  
Sets forth and magnifies herself; thus feeds  
A calm, a beautiful, and silent fire,  
From the encumbrances of mortal life,  
From error, disappointment—nay, from guilt;  
And sometimes, so relenting justice wills,  
From palpable oppressions of despair."

The Solitary by these words was touched  
With manifest emotion, and exclaimed;  
"But how begin? and whence?—'The Mind is free—  
Resolve,' the haughty Moralist would say,  
'This single act is all that we demand.'  
Alas! such wisdom bids a creature fly  
Whose very sorrow is, that time hath shorn  
His natural wings!—To friendship let him turn  
For succour; but perhaps he sits alone  
On stormy waters, tossed in a little boat  
That holds but him, and can contain no more!  
Religion tells of amity sublime  
Which no condition can preclude; of One  
Who sees all suffering, comprehends all wants,  
All weakness fathoms, can supply all needs:  
But is that bounty absolute?—His gifts,  
Are they not, still, in some degree, rewards  
For acts of service? Can his love extend  
To hearts that own not him? Will showers of grace,  
When in the sky no promise may be seen,  
Fall to refresh a parched and withered land?  
Or shall the groaning Spirit cast her load  
At the Redeemer's feet?"

In rueful tone,  
With some impatience in his mien, he spake:  
Back to my mind rushed all that had been urged  
To calm the Sufferer when his story closed;  
I looked for counsel as unbending now;  
But a discriminating sympathy  
Stooped to this apt reply:—

"As men from men  
Do, in the constitution of their souls,  
Differ, by mystery not to be explained;  
And as we fall by various ways, and sink  
One deeper than another, self-condemned,

Through manifold degrees of guilt and shame ;  
 So manifold and various are the ways  
 Of restoration, fashioned to the steps  
 Of all infirmity, and tending all  
 To the same point, attainable by all—  
 Peace in ourselves, and union with our God.  
 For you, assuredly, a hopeful road  
 Lies open : we have heard from you a voice  
 At every moment softened in its course  
 By tenderness of heart ; have seen your eye,  
 Even like an altar lit by fire from heaven,  
 Kindle before us.—Your discourse this day,  
 That, like the fabled Lethe, wished to flow  
 In creeping sadness, through oblivious shades  
 Of death and night, has caught at every turn  
 The colours of the sun. Access for you  
 Is yet preserved to principles of truth,  
 Which the imaginative Will upholds  
 In seats of wisdom, not to be approached  
 By the inferior Faculty that moulds,  
 With her minute and speculative pains,  
 Opinion, ever changing !

I have seen  
 A curious child, who dwelt upon a tract  
 Of inland ground, applying to his ear  
 The convolutions of a smooth-lipped shell ;  
 To which, in silence hushed, his very soul  
 Listened intensely ; and his countenance soon  
 Brightened with joy ; for from within were heard  
 Murmurings, whereby the monitor expressed  
 Mysterious union with its native sea.  
 Even such a shell the universe itself  
 Is to the ear of Faith ; and there are times,  
 I doubt not, when to you it doth impart  
 Authentic tidings of invisible things ;  
 Of ebb and flow, and ever-during power ;  
 And central peace, subsisting at the heart  
 Of endless agitation. Here you stand,  
 Adore, and worship, when you know it not ;  
 Pious beyond the intention of your thought ;  
 Devout above the meaning of your will.  
 —Yes, you have felt, and may not cease to feel.  
 The estate of man would be indeed forlorn  
 If false conclusions of the reasoning power  
 Made the eye blind, and closed the passages

Through which the ear converses with the heart.)  
Has not the soul, the being of your life,  
Received a shock of awful consciousness,  
In some calm season, when these lofty rocks  
At night's approach bring down the unclouded sky,  
To rest upon their circumambient walls ;  
A temple framing of dimensions vast,  
And yet not too enormous for the sound  
Of human anthems—choral song, or burst  
Sublime of instrumental harmony,  
To glorify the Eternal ! What if these  
Did never break the stillness that prevails  
Here,—if the solemn nightingale be mute,  
And the soft woodlark here did never chant  
Her vespers,—Nature fails not to provide  
Impulse and utterance. The whispering air  
Sends inspiration from the shadowy heights,  
And blind recesses of the caverned rocks ;  
The little rills, and waters numberless,  
Inaudible by daylight, blend their notes  
With the loud streams : and often, at the hour  
When issue forth the first pale stars, is heard,  
Within the circuit of this fabric huge,  
One voice—the solitary raven, flying  
Athwart the concave of the dark blue dome,  
Unseen, perchance above all power of sight—  
An iron knell ! with echoes from afar  
Faint—and still fainter—as the cry, with which  
The wanderer accompanies her flight  
Through the calm region, fades upon the ear,  
Diminishing by distance till it seemed  
To expire ; yet from the abyss is caught again,  
And yet again recovered !

But descending  
From these imaginative heights, that yield  
Far-stretching views into eternity,  
Acknowledge that to Nature's humbler power  
Your cherished sullenness is forced to bend  
Even here, where her amenities are sown  
With sparing hand. Then trust yourself abroad  
To range her blooming bowers, and spacious fields,  
Where on the labours of the happy throng  
She smiles, including in her wide embrace  
City, and town, and tower,—and sea with ships  
Sprinkled ;—be our Companion while we track

Her rivers populous with gliding life ;  
 While, free as air, o'er printless sands we march,  
 Or pierce the gloom of her majestic woods ;  
 Roaming, or resting under grateful shade  
 In peace and meditative cheerfulness ;  
 Where living things, and things inanimate,  
 Do speak, at Heaven's command, to eye and ear,  
 And speak to social reason's inner sense,  
 With inarticulate language.

For, the Man—  
 Who, in this spirit, communes with the Forms  
 Of nature, who with understanding heart  
 Both knows and loves such objects as excite  
 No morbid passions, no disquietude,  
 No vengeance, and no hatred—needs must feel  
 The joy of that pure principle of love  
 So deeply, that, unsatisfied with aught  
 Less pure and exquisite, he cannot choose  
 But seek for objects of a kindred love  
 In fellow-natures and a kindred joy.  
 Accordingly he by degrees perceives  
 His feelings of aversion softened down ;  
 A holy tenderness pervade his frame.  
 His sanity of reason not impaired,  
 Say rather, all his thoughts now flowing clear,  
 From a clear fountain flowing, he looks round  
 And seeks for good ; and finds the good he seeks :  
 Until abhorrence and contempt are things  
 He only knows by name ; and, if he hear,  
 From other mouths, the language which they speak,  
 He is compassionate ; and has no thought,  
 No feeling, which can overcome his love.

And further ; by contemplating these Forms  
 In the relations which they bear to man,  
 He shall discern, how, through the various means  
 Which silently they yield, are multiplied  
 The spiritual presences of absent things.  
 Trust me, that for the instructed, time will come  
 When they shall meet no object but may teach  
 Some acceptable lesson to their minds  
 Of human suffering, or of human joy,  
 So shall they learn, while all things speak of man,  
 Their duties from all forms ; and general laws,  
 And local accidents, shall tend alike

To rouse, to urge ; and, with the will, confer  
The ability to spread the blessings wide  
Of true philanthropy. The light of love  
Not failing, perseverance from their steps  
Departing not, for them shall be confirmed  
The glorious habit by which sense is made  
Subservient still to moral purposes,  
Auxiliar to divine. That change shall clothe  
The naked spirit, ceasing to deplore  
The burthen of existence. Science then  
Shall be a precious visitant ; and then,  
And only then, be worthy of her name :  
For then her heart shall kindle ; her dull eye,  
Dull and inanimate, no more shall hang  
Chained to its object in brute slavery ;  
But taught with patient interest to watch  
The processes of things, and serve the cause  
Of order and distinctness, not for this  
Shall it forget that its most noble use,  
Its most illustrious province, must be found  
In furnishing clear guidance, a support  
Not treacherous, to the mind's *excursive* power.  
—So build we up the Being that we are ;  
Thus deeply drinking-in the soul of things  
We shall be wise perforce ; and, while inspired  
By choice, and conscious that the Will is free,  
Shall move unswerving, even as if impelled  
By strict necessity, along the path  
Of order and of good. Whate'er we see,  
Or feel, shall tend to quicken and refine ;  
Shall fix, in calmer seats of moral strength,  
Earthly desires ; and raise, to loftier heights  
Of divine love, our intellectual soul."

Here closed the Sage that eloquent harangue,  
Poured forth with fervour in continuous stream,  
Such as, remote, 'mid savage wilderness,  
An Indian Chief discharges from his breast  
Into the hearing of assembled tribes,  
In open circle seated round, and hushed  
As the unbreathing air, when not a leaf  
Stirs in the mighty woods.—So did he speak :  
The words he uttered shall not pass away  
Dispersed, like music that the wind takes up  
By snatches, and lets fall, to be forgotten ;

No—they sank into me, the bounteous gift  
Of one whom time and nature had made wise.  
Gracing his doctrine with authority  
Which hostile spirits silently allow ;  
Of one accustomed to desires that feed  
On fruitage gathered from the tree of life ;  
To hopes on knowledge and experience built ;  
Of one in whom persuasion and belief  
*Had ripened into faith, and faith become*  
A passionate intuition ; whence the Soul,  
Though bound to earth by ties of pity and love,  
From all injurious servitude was free.

The Sun, before his place of rest were reached  
Had yet to travel far, but unto us,  
To us who stood low in that hollow dell,  
He had become invisible,—a pomp  
Leaving behind of yellow radiance spread  
Over the mountain sides, in contrast bold  
With ample shadows, seemingly, no less  
Than those resplendent lights, his rich bequest ;  
A dispensation of his evening power.  
—Adown the path that from the glen had led  
The funeral train, the Shepherd and his Mate  
Were seen descending :—forth to greet them ran  
Our little Page : the rustic pair approach ;  
And in the Matron's countenance may be read  
Plain indication that the words, which told  
How that neglected Pensioner was sent  
Before his time into a quiet grave,  
Had done to her humanity no wrong :  
But we are kindly welcomed—promptly served  
With ostentatious zeal.—Along the floor  
Of the small Cottage in the lonely Dell  
A grateful couch was spread for our repose ;  
Where, in the guise of mountaineers, we lay,  
Stretched upon fragrant heath, and lulled by sound  
Of far-off torrents charming the still night,  
And, to tired limbs and over-busy thoughts,  
Inviting sleep and soft forgetfulness.

## BOOK FIFTH

## THE PASTOR

## ARGUMENT

Farewell to the Valley—Reflections—A large and populous Vale described—The Pastor's Dwelling, and some account of him—Church and Monuments—The Solitary musing, and where—Roused—In the Churchyard the Solitary communicates the thoughts which had recently passed through his mind—Lofty tone of the Wanderer's discourse of yesterday adverted to—Rite of Baptism, and the professions accompanying it, contrasted with the real state of human life—Apology for the Rite—Inconsistency of the best men—Acknowledgment that practice falls far below the injunctions of duty as existing in the mind—General complaint of a falling-off in the value of life after the time of youth—Outward appearances of content and happiness in degree illusive—Pastor approaches—Appeal made to him—His answer—Wanderer in sympathy with him—Suggestion that the least ambitious enquirers may be most free from error—The Pastor is desired to give some portraits of the living or dead from his own observation of life among these Mountains—And for what purpose—Pastor consents—Mountain cottage—Excellent qualities of its Inhabitants—Solitary expresses his pleasure; but denies the praise of virtue to worth of this kind—Feelings of the Priest before he enters upon his account of persons interred in the Churchyard—Graves of unbaptized Infants—Funeral and sepulchral observances, whence—Ecclesiastical Establishments, whence derived—Profession of belief in the doctrine of Immortality.

"FAREWELL, deep Valley, with thy one rude House,  
And its small lot of life-supporting fields,  
And guardian rocks!—Farewell, attractive seat!  
To the still influx of the morning light  
Open, and day's pure cheerfulness, but veiled  
From human observation, as if yet  
Primeval forests wrapped thee round with dark  
Impenetrable shade; once more farewell,  
Majestic circuit, beautiful abyss,  
By Nature destined from the birth of things  
For quietness profound!"

Upon the side  
Of that brown ridge, sole outlet of the vale  
Which foot of boldest stranger would attempt,  
Lingering behind my comrades, thus I breathed  
A parting tribute to a spot that seemed  
Like the fixed centre of a troubled world.  
Again I halted with reverted eyes;  
The chain that would not slacken, was at length  
Snapt,—and, pursuing leisurely my way,

How vain, thought I, is it by change of place  
To seek that comfort which the mind denies ;  
Yet trial and temptation oft are shunned  
Wisely ; and by such tenure do we hold  
Frail life's possessions, that even they whose fate  
Yields no peculiar reason of complaint  
Might, by the promise that is here, be won  
To steal from active duties, and embrace  
Obscurity, and undisturbed repose.  
—Knowledge, methinks, in these disordered times,  
Should be allowed a privilege to have  
Her anchorites, like piety of old ;  
Men, who, from faction sacred, and unstained  
By war, might, if so minded, turn aside  
Uncensured, and subsist, a scattered few  
Living to God and nature, and content  
With that communion. Consecrated be  
The spots where such abide ! But happier still  
The Man, whom, furthermore, a hope attends  
That meditation and research may guide  
His privacy to principles and powers  
Discovered or invented ; or set forth,  
Through his acquaintance with the ways of truth,  
In lucid order ; so that, when his course  
Is run, some faithful eulogist may say,  
He sought not praise, and praise did overlook  
His unobtrusive merit ; but his life,  
Sweet to himself, was exercised in good  
That shall survive his name and memory.

Acknowledgments of gratitude sincere  
Accompanied these musings ; fervent thanks  
For my own peaceful lot and happy choice ;  
A choice that from the passions of the world  
Withdrew, and fixed me in a still retreat ;  
Sheltered, but not to social duties lost,  
Secluded, but not buried ; and with song  
Cheering my days, and with industrious thought ;  
With the ever-welcome company of books ;  
With virtuous friendship's soul-sustaining aid,  
And with the blessings of domestic love.

Thus occupied in mind I paced along,  
Following the rugged road, by sledge or wheel  
Worn in the moorland, till I overtook  
My two Associates, in the morning sunshine

Halting together on a rocky knoll,  
Whence the bare road descended rapidly  
To the green meadows of another vale.

Here did our pensive Host put forth his hand  
In sign of farewell. "Nay," the old Man said,  
"The fragrant air its coolness still retains ;  
The herds and flocks are yet abroad to crop  
The dewy grass ; you cannot leave us now,  
We must not part at this inviting hour."  
He yielded, though reluctant ; for his mind  
Instinctively disposed him to retire  
To his own covert ; as a billow, heaved  
Upon the beach, rolls back into the sea.  
—So we descend : and winding round a rock  
Attain a point that showed the valley—stretched  
In length before us ; and, not distant far,  
Upon a rising ground a grey church-tower,  
Whose battlements were screened by tufted trees.  
And towards a crystal Mere, that lay beyond  
Among steep hills and woods embosomed, flowed  
A copious stream with boldly-winding course ;  
Here traceable, there hidden—there again  
To sight restored, and glittering in the sun.  
On the stream's bank, and everywhere, appeared  
Fair dwellings, single, or in social knots ;  
Some scattered o'er the level, others perched  
On the hill sides, a cheerful quiet scene,  
Now in its morning purity arrayed.

"As 'mid some happy valley of the Alps,"  
Said I, "once happy, ere tyrannic power,  
Wantonly breaking in upon the Swiss,  
Destroyed their unoffending commonwealth,  
A popular equality reigns here,  
Save for yon stately House beneath whose roof  
A rural lord might dwell."—"No feudal pomp,  
Or power," replied the Wanderer, "to that House  
Belongs, but there in his allotted Home  
Abides, from year to year, a genuine Priest,  
The shepherd of his flock ; or, as a king  
Is styled, when most affectionately praised,  
The father of his people. Such is he ;  
And rich and poor, and young and old, rejoice  
Under his spiritual sway. He hath vouchsafed  
To me some portion of a kind regard ;

And something also of his inner mind  
 Hath he imparted—but I speak of him  
 As he is known to all.

The calm delights  
 Of unambitious piety he chose,  
 And learning's solid dignity ; though born  
 Of knightly race, nor wanting powerful friends.  
 Hither, in prime of manhood, he withdrew  
 From academic bowers. He loved the spot—  
 Who does not love his native soil?—he prized  
 The ancient rural character, composed  
 Of simple manners, feelings unsuppress'd  
 And undisguised, and strong and serious thought  
 A character reflected in himself,  
 With such embellishment as well beseems  
 His rank and sacred function. This deep vale  
 Winds far in reaches hidden from our sight,  
 And one a turreted manorial hall  
 Adorns, in which the good Man's ancestors  
 Have dwelt through ages, Patrons of this Cure.  
 To them, and to his own judicious pains,  
 The Vicar's dwelling, and the whole domain,  
 Owes that presiding aspect which might well  
 Attract your notice ; statelier than could else  
 Have been bestowed, through course of common chance,  
 On an unwealthy mountain Benefice."

This said, oft pausing, we pursued our way ;  
 Nor reached the village-churchyard till the sun,  
 Travelling at steadier pace than ours, had risen  
 Above the summits of the highest hills,  
 And round our path darted oppressive beams.

As chanced, the portals of the sacred Pile  
 Stood open ; and we entered. On my frame,  
 At such transition from the fervid air,  
 A grateful coolness fell, that seemed to strike  
 The heart, in concert with that temperate awe  
 And natural reverence which the place inspired.  
 Not raised in nice proportions was the pile,  
 But large and massy ; for duration built :  
 With pillars crowded, and the roof upheld  
 By naked rafters intricately crossed,  
 Like leafless underboughs, in some thick wood,  
 All withered by the depth of shade above.

Admonitory texts inscribed the walls,  
Each, in its ornamental scroll, enclosed ;  
Each also crowned with wingèd heads—a pair  
Of rudely-painted Cherubim. The floor  
Of nave and aisle, in unpretending guise,  
Was occupied by oaken benches ranged  
In seemly rows ; the chancel only showed  
Some vain distinctions, marks of earthly state  
By immemorial privilege allowed ;  
Though with the Encincture's special sanctity  
But ill according. An heraldic shield,  
Varying its tincture with the changeful light,  
Imbued the altar-window ; fixed aloft  
A faded hatchment hung, and one by time  
Yet undiscoloured. A capacious pew  
Of sculptured oak stood here, with drapery lined ;  
And marble monuments were here displayed  
Thronging the walls ; and on the floor beneath  
Sepulchral stones appeared, with emblems graven  
And foot-worn epitaphs, and some with small  
And shining effigies of brass inlaid.

The tribute by these various records claimed,  
Duly we paid, each after each, and read  
The ordinary chronicle of birth,  
Office, alliance, and promotion—all  
Ending in dust ; of upright magistrates,  
Grave doctors strenuous for the mother-church,  
And uncorrupted senators, alike  
To king and people true. A brazen plate,  
Not easily deciphered, told of one  
Whose course of earthly honour was begun  
In quality of page among the train  
Of the eighth Henry, when he crossed the seas  
His royal state to show, and prove his strength  
In tournament, upon the fields of France.  
Another tablet registered the death,  
And praised the gallant bearing, of a Knight  
Tried in the sea-fights of the second C  
Near this brave Knight his Father lay  
And, to the silent language giving  
I read,—how in his manhood's  
He, 'mid the afflictions of intense  
And rightful government subverted  
One only solace—that he had espoused

A virtuous Lady tenderly beloved  
 For her benign perfections ; and yet more  
 Endear'd to him, for this, that, in her state  
 Of wedlock richly crowned with Heaven's regard,  
 She with a numerous issue filled his house,  
 Who throve, like plants, uninjured by the storm  
 That laid their country waste. No need to speak  
 Of less particular notices assigned  
 To Youth or Maiden gone before their time,  
 And Matrons and unwedded Sisters old ;  
 Whose charity and goodness were rehearsed  
 In modest panegyric.

“ These dim lines,  
 What would they tell ? ” said I, —but, from the task  
 Of puzzling out that faded narrative,  
 With whisper soft my venerable Friend  
 Called me ; and, looking down the darksome aisle,  
 I saw the Tenant of the lonely vale  
 Standing apart ; with curv'd arm reclined  
 On the baptismal font ; his pallid face  
 Upturned, as if his mind were rapt, or lost  
 In some abstraction ; —gracefully he stood,  
 The semblance bearing of a sculptured form  
 That leans upon a monumental urn  
 In peace, from morn to night, from year to year.

Him from that posture did the Sexton rouse ;  
 Who entered, humming carelessly a tune,  
 Continuation haply of the notes  
 That had beguiled the work from which he came,  
 With spade and mattock o'er his shoulder hung ;  
 To be deposited, for future need,  
 In their appointed place. The pale Recluse  
 Withdrew ; and straight we followed, —to a spot  
 Where sun and shade were intermixed ; for there  
 A broad oak, stretching forth its leafy arms  
 From an adjoining pasture, overhung  
 Small space of that green churchyard with a light  
 And pleasant awning. On the moss-grown wall  
 My ancient Friend and I together took  
 Our seats ; and thus the Solitary spake,  
 Standing before us :—

“ Did you note the mien  
 Of that self-solaced, easy-hearted churl,  
 Death's hireling, who scoops out his neighbour's grave,

Or wraps an old acquaintance up in clay,  
All unconcerned as he would bind a sheaf,  
Or plant a tree. And did you hear his voice?  
I was abruptly summoned by the sound  
From some affecting images and thoughts,  
Which then were silent ; but crave utterance now.

Much," he continued, with dejected look,  
"Much, yesterday, was said in glowing phrase,  
Of our sublime dependencies, and hopes  
For future states of being ; and the wings  
Of speculation, joyfully outspread,  
Hovered above our destiny on earth :  
But stoop, and place the prospect of the soul  
In sober contrast with reality,  
And man's substantial life. If this mute earth  
Of what it holds could speak, and every grave  
Were as a volume, shut, yet capable  
Of yielding its contents to eye and ear,  
We should recoil, stricken with sorrow and shame,  
To see disclosed, by such dread proof, how ill  
That which is done accords with what is known  
To reason, and by conscience is enjoined ;  
How idly, how perversely, life's whole course,  
To this conclusion, deviates from the line,  
Or of the end stops short, proposed to all  
At her aspiring outset.

Mark the babe  
Not long accustomed to this breathing world ;  
One that hath barely learned to shape a smile,  
Though yet irrational of soul, to grasp  
With tiny finger—to let fall a tear ;  
And, as the heavy cloud of sleep dissolves,  
To stretch his limbs, bemocking, as might seem,  
The outward functions of intelligent man ;  
A grave proficient in amusive feats  
Of puppetry, that from the lap declare  
His expectations, and announce his claims  
To that inheritance which millions rue  
That they were ever born to ! In due time  
A day of solemn ceremonial comes ;  
When they, who for this Minor hold in trust  
Rights that transcend the loftiest heritage  
Of mere humanity, present their Charge,  
For this occasion daintily adorned,

At the baptismal font. And when the pure  
 And consecrating element hath cleansed  
 The original stain, the child is there received  
 Into the second ark, Christ's church, with trust  
 That he, from wrath redeemed, therein shall float  
 Over the billows of this troublesome world  
 To the fair land of everlasting life.  
 Corrupt affections, covetous desires,  
 Are all renounced ; high as the thought of man  
 Can carry virtue, virtue is professed ;  
 A dedication made, a promise given  
 For due provision to control and guide,  
 And unremitting progress to ensure  
 In holiness and truth."

" You cannot blame,"

Here interposing fervently I said,  
 " Rites which attest that Man by nature lies  
 Bedded for good and evil in a gulf  
 Fearfully low ; nor will your judgment scorn  
 Those services, whereby attempt is made  
 To lift the creature toward that eminence  
 On which, now fallen, erewhile in majesty  
 He stood ; or if not so, whose top serene  
 At least he feels 'tis given him to descry ;  
 Not without aspirations, evermore  
 Returning, and injunctions from within  
 Doubt to cast off and weariness ; in trust  
 That what the Soul perceives, if glory lost,  
 May be, through pains and persevering hope,  
 Recovered ; or, if hitherto unknown,  
 Lies within reach, and one day shall be gained."

" I blame them not," he calmly answered—" no ;  
 ' The outward ritual and established forms  
 With which communities of men invest  
 These inward feelings, and the aspiring vows  
 To which the lips give public utterance  
 Are both a natural process ; and by me  
 Shall pass uncensured ; though the issue prove,  
 Bringing from age to age its own reproach,  
 Incongruous, impotent, and blank.—But, oh !  
 If to be weak is to be wretched—miserable,  
 As the lost Angel by a human voice  
 Hath mournfully pronounced, then, in my mind,  
 Far better not to move at all than move

By impulse sent from such illusive power,—  
That finds and cannot fasten down ; that grasps  
And is rejoiced, and loses while it grasps ;  
That tempts, emboldens—for a time sustains,  
And then betrays ; accuses and inflicts  
Remorseless punishment ; and so retreads  
The inevitable circle : better far  
Than this, to graze the herb in thoughtless peace,  
By foresight or remembrance, undisturbed !

Philosophy ! and thou more vaunted name  
Religion ! with thy statelier retinue,  
Faith, Hope, and Charity—from the visible world  
Choose for your emblems whatsoe'er ye find  
Of safest guidance or of firmest trust—  
The torch, the star, the anchor ; nor except  
The cross itself, at whose unconscious feet  
The generations of mankind have knelt  
Ruefully seized, and shedding bitter tears,  
And through that conflict seeking rest—of you,  
High-titled Powers, am I constrained to ask,  
Here standing, with the unvoyageable sky  
In faint reflection of infinitude  
Stretched overhead, and at my pensive feet  
A subterraneous magazine of bones,  
In whose dark vaults my own shall soon be laid,  
Where are your triumphs ? your dominion where ?  
And in what age admitted and confirmed ?  
—Not for a happy land do I enquire,  
Island or grove, that hides a blessed few  
Who, with obedience willing and sincere,  
To your serene authorities conform ;  
But whom, I ask, of individual Souls,  
Have ye withdrawn from passion's crooked ways,  
Inspired, and thoroughly fortified ?—If the heart  
Could be inspected to its inmost folds  
By sight undazzled with the glare of praise,  
Who shall be named—in the resplendent line  
Of sages, martyrs, confessors—the man  
Whom the best might of faith, wherever fixed,  
For one day's little compass, has preserved  
From painful and discreditable shocks  
Of contradiction, from some vague desire  
Culpably cherished, or corrupt relapse  
To some unsanctioned fear ?”

"If this be so,  
 And Man," said I, "be in his noblest shape  
 Thus pitiaibly infirm ; then, he who made,  
 And who shall judge the creature, will forgive.  
 —Yet, in its general tenor, your complaint  
 Is all too true ; and surely not misplaced :  
 For, from this pregnant spot of ground, such thoughts  
 Rise to the notice of a serious mind  
 By natural exhalation. With the dead  
 In their repose, the living in their mirth,  
 Who can reflect, unmoved, upon the round  
 Of smooth and solemnized complacencies,  
 By which, on Christian lands, from age to age  
 Profession mocks performance. Earth is sick,  
 And Heaven is weary, of the hollow words  
 Which States and Kingdoms utter when they talk  
 Of truth and justice. Turn to private life  
 And social neighbourhood ; look we to ourselves ;  
 A light of duty shines on every day  
 For all ; and yet how few are warned or cheered !  
 How few who mingle with their fellow-men  
 And still remain self-governed, and apart,  
 Like this our honoured Friend ; and thence acquire  
 Right to expect his vigorous decline,  
 That promises to the end a blest old age ! "

"Yet," with a smile of triumph thus exclaimed  
 The Solitary, "in the life of man,  
 If to the poetry of common speech  
 Faith may be given, we see as in a glass  
 A true reflection of the circling year,  
 With all its seasons. Grant that Spring is there,  
 In spite of many a rough untoward blast,  
 Hopeful and promising with buds and flowers ;  
 Yet where is glowing Summer's long rich day,  
 That *ought* to follow faithfully expressed ?  
 And mellow Autumn, charged with bounteous fruit,  
 Where is she imaged ? in what favoured clime  
 Her lavish pomp, and ripe magnificence ?  
 —Yet, while the better part is missed, the worse  
 In man's autumnal season is set forth  
 With a resemblance not to be denied,  
 And that contents him ; bowers that hear no more  
 The voice of gladness, less and less supply  
 Of outward sunshine and internal warmth ;

And, with this change, sharp air and falling leaves,  
Foretelling aged Winter's desolate sway.

How gay the habitations that bedeck  
This fertile valley! Not a house but seems  
To give assurance of content within;  
Embosomed happiness, and placid love;  
As if the sunshine of the day were met  
With answering brightness in the hearts of all  
Who walk this favoured ground. But chance-regards,  
And notice forced upon incurious ears;  
These, if these only, acting in despite  
Of the encomiums by my Friend pronounced  
On humble life, forbid the judging mind  
To trust the smiling aspect of this fair  
And noiseless commonwealth. The simple race  
Of mountaineers (by nature's self removed  
From foul temptations, and by constant care  
Of a good shepherd tended as themselves  
Do tend their flocks) partake man's general lot  
With little mitigation. They escape,  
Perchance, the heavier woes of guilt; feel not  
The tedium of fantastic idleness:  
Yet life, as with the multitude, with them  
Is fashioned like an ill-constructed tale;  
That on the outset wastes its gay desires,  
Its fair adventures, its enlivening hopes,  
And pleasant interests—for the sequel leaving  
Old things repeated with diminished grace;  
And all the laboured novelties at best  
Imperfect substitutes, whose use and power  
Evince the want and weakness whence they spring."

While in this serious mood we held discourse,  
The reverend Pastor toward the churchyard gate  
Approached; and, with a mild respectful air,  
Of native cordiality, our Friend  
Advanced to greet him. With a gracious mien  
Was he received, and mutual joy prevailed.  
Awhile they stood in conference, and I guess  
That he, who now upon the mossy wall  
Sate by my side, had vanished, if a wish  
Could have transferred him to the flying clouds,  
Or the least penetrable hiding-place  
In his own valley's rocky guardianship.  
—For me, I looked upon the pair, well pleased:

Nature had framed them both, and both were marked  
 By circumstance, with intermixture fine  
 Of contrast and resemblance. To an oak,  
 Hardy and grand, a weather-beaten oak,  
 Fresh in the strength and majesty of age,  
 One might be likened : flourishing appeared,  
 Though somewhat past the fulness of his prime,  
 The other—like a stately sycamore,  
 That spreads, in gentle pomp, its honied shade.

A general greeting was exchanged ; and soon  
 The Pastor learned that his approach had given  
 A welcome interruption to discourse  
 Grave, and in truth too often sad.—“Is Man  
 A child of hope ? Do generations press  
 On generations, without progress made ?  
 Halts the individual, ere his hairs be grey,  
 Perforce ? Are we a creature in whom good  
 Preponderates, or evil ? Doth the will  
 Acknowledge reason's law ? A living power  
 Is virtue, or no better than a name,  
 Fleeting as health or beauty, and unsound ?  
 So that the only substance which remains,  
 (For thus the tenor of complaint hath run)  
 Among so many shadows, are the pains  
 And penalties of miserable life,  
 Doomed to decay, and then expire in dust !  
 —Our cogitations, this way have been drawn,  
 These are the points,” the Wanderer said, “on which  
 Our inquest turns.—Accord, good Sir ! the light  
 Of your experience to dispel this gloom :  
 By your persuasive wisdom shall the heart  
 That frets, or languishes, be stilled and cheered.”

“Our nature,” said the Priest, in mild reply,  
 “Angels may weigh and fathom : they perceive,  
 With undistempered and unclouded spirit,  
 The object as it is ; but, for ourselves,  
 That speculative height *we* may not reach.  
 The good and evil are our own ; and we  
 Are that which we would contemplate from far.  
 Knowledge, for us, is difficult to gain—  
 Is difficult to gain, and hard to keep—  
 As virtue's self ; like virtue is beset  
 With snares ; tried, tempted, subject to decay.  
 Love, admiration, fear, desire, and hate,

Blind were we without these : through these alone  
Are capable to notice or discern  
Or to record ; we judge, but cannot be  
Indifferent judges. 'Spite of proudest boast,  
Reason, best reason, is to imperfect man  
An effort only, and a noble aim ;  
A crown, an attribute of sovereign power,  
Still to be courted—never to be won.  
—Look forth, or each man dive into himself ;  
What sees he but a creature too perturbed ;  
That is transported to excess ; that yearns,  
Regrets, or trembles, wrongly, or too much ;  
Hopes rashly, in disgust as rash recoils ;  
Battens on spleen, or moulders in despair ?  
Thus comprehension fails, and truth is missed ;  
Thus darkness and delusion round our path  
Spread, from disease, whose subtle injury lurks  
Within the very faculty of sight.

Yet for the general purposes of faith  
In Providence, for solace and support,  
We may not doubt that who can best subject  
The will to reason's law, can strictliest live  
And act in that obedience, he shall gain  
The clearest apprehension of those truths,  
Which unassisted reason's utmost power  
Is too infirm to reach. But, waiving this,  
And our regards confining within bounds  
Of less exalted consciousness, through which  
The very multitude are free to range,  
We safely may affirm that human life  
Is either fair and tempting, a soft scene  
Grateful to sight, refreshing to the soul,  
Or a forbidden tract of cheerless view ;  
Even as the same is looked at, or approached.  
Thus, when in changeful April fields are white  
With new-fallen snow, if from the sullen north  
Your walk conduct you hither, ere the sun  
Hath gained his noontide height, this churchyard, filled  
With mounds transversely lying side by side  
From east to west, before you will appear  
An unilluminated, blank and dreary plain,  
With more than wintry cheerlessness and gloom  
Saddening the heart. Go forward, and look back ;  
Look, from the quarter whence the lord of light,

Of life, of love, and gladness doth dispense  
 His beams ; which, unexcluded in their fall,  
 Upon the southern side of every grave  
 Have gently exercised a melting power ;  
*Then* will a vernal prospect greet your eye,  
 All fresh and beautiful, and green and bright,  
 Hopeful and cheerful ;—vanished is the pall  
 That overspread and chilled the sacred turf,  
 Vanished or hidden ; and the whole domain,  
 To some, too lightly minded, might appear  
 A meadow carpet for the dancing hours.  
 —This contrast, not unsuitable to life,  
 Is to that other state more apposite,  
 Death and its two-fold aspect ! wintry—one,  
 Cold, sullen, blank, from hope and joy shut out ;  
 The other, which the ray divine hath touched,  
 Replete with vivid promise, bright as spring."

"We see, then, as we feel," the Wanderer thus  
 With a complacent animation spake,  
 "And in your judgment, Sir ! the mind's repose  
 On evidence is not to be ensured  
 By act of naked reason. Moral truth  
 Is no mechanic structure, built by rule ;  
 And which, once built, retains a stedfast shape  
 And undisturbed proportions ; but a thing  
 Subject, you deem, to vital accidents ;  
 And, like the water-lily, lives and thrives,  
 Whose root is fixed in stable earth, whose head  
 Floats on the tossing waves. With joy sincere  
 I re-salute these sentiments confirmed  
 By your authority. But how acquire  
 The inward principle that gives effect  
 To outward argument ; the passive will  
 Meek to admit ; the active energy,  
 Strong and unbounded to embrace, and firm  
 To keep and cherish ? how shall man unite  
 With self-forgetting tenderness of heart  
 An earth-despising dignity of soul ?  
 Wise in that union, and without it blind !"

"The way," said I, "to court, if not obtain  
 The ingenuous mind, apt to be set aright ;  
 This, in the lonely dell discoursing, you  
 Declared at large ; and by what exercise  
 From visible nature, or the inner self

Power may be trained, and renovation brought  
To those who need the gift. But, after all,  
Is aught so certain as that man is doomed  
To breathe beneath a vault of ignorance?  
The natural roof of that dark house in which  
His soul is pent! How little can be known—  
This is the wise man's sigh; how far we err—  
This is the good man's not unfrequent pang!  
And they perhaps err least, the lowly class  
Whom a benign necessity compels  
To follow reason's least ambitious course;  
Such do I mean who, unperplexed by doubt,  
And unincited by a wish to look  
Into high objects farther than they may,  
Pace to and fro, from morn till eventide,  
The narrow avenue of daily toil  
For daily bread."

"Yes," buoyantly exclaimed  
The pale Recluse—"praise to the sturdy plough,  
And patient spade; praise to the simple crook,  
And ponderous loom—resounding while it holds  
Body and mind in one captivity;  
And let the light mechanic tool be hailed  
With honour; which, encasing by the power  
Of long companionship, the artist's hand,  
Cuts off that hand, with all its world of nerves,  
From a too busy commerce with the heart!  
—Inglorious implements of craft and toil,  
Both ye that shape and build, and ye that force  
By slow solicitation, earth to yield  
Her annual bounty, sparingly dealt forth  
With wise reluctance; you would I extol,  
Not for gross good alone which ye produce,  
But for the impertinent and ceaseless strife  
Of proofs and reasons ye preclude—in those  
Who to your dull society are born,  
And with their humble birthright rest content.  
—Would I had ne'er renounced it!"

A slight flush  
Of moral anger previously had tinged  
The old Man's cheek; but, at this closing turn  
Of self-reproach, it passed away. Said he,  
"That which we feel we utter; as we think  
So have we argued; reaping for our pains  
No visible recompense. For our relief

Of life, of love, and gladness doth dispense  
 His beams ; which, unexcluded in their fall,  
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"That which we feel we utter; as we think  
So have we argued; reaping for our pains  
No visible recompense. For our relief

You," to the Pastor turning thus he spake,  
 "Have kindly interposed. May I entreat  
 Your further help? The mine of real life  
 Dig for us; and present us, in the shape  
 Of virgin ore, that gold which we, by pains  
 Fruitless as those of æry alchemists,  
 Seek from the torturing crucible. There lies  
 Around us a domain where you have long  
 Watched both the outward course and inner heart:  
 Give us, for our abstractions, solid facts;  
 For our disputes, plain pictures. Say what man  
 He is who cultivates yon hanging field;  
 What qualities of mind she bears, who comes,  
 For morn and evening service, with her pail,  
 To that green pasture; place before our sight  
 The family who dwell within yon house  
 Fenced round with glittering laurel; or in that  
 Below, from which the curling smoke ascends.  
 Or rather, as we stand on holy earth,  
 And have the dead around us, take from them  
 Your instances; for they are both best known,  
 And by frail man most equitably judged.  
 Epitomise the life; pronounce, you can,  
 Authentic epitaphs on some of these  
 Who, from their lowly mansions hither brought,  
 Beneath this turf lie mouldering at our feet:  
 So, by your records, may our doubts be solved;  
 And so, not searching higher, we may learn  
*To prize the breath we share with human kind;  
 And look upon the dust of man with awe.*"

The Priest replied—"An office you impose  
 For which peculiar requisites are mine;  
 Yet much, I feel, is wanting—else the task  
 Would be most grateful. True indeed it is  
 That they whom death has hidden from our sight  
 Are worthiest of the mind's regard; with these  
 The future cannot contradict the past:  
 Mortality's last exercise and proof  
 Is undergone; the transit made that shows  
 The very Soul, revealed as she departs.  
 Yet, on your first suggestion, will I give,  
 Ere we descend into these silent vaults,  
 One picture from the living.

You behold,

High on the breast of yon dark mountain, dark  
With stony barrenness, a shining speck  
Bright as a sunbeam sleeping till a shower  
Brush it away, or cloud pass over it ;  
And such it might be deemed—a sleeping sunbeam ;  
But 'tis a plot of cultivated ground,  
Cut off, an island in the dusky waste ;  
And that attractive brightness is its own.  
The lofty site, by nature framed to tempt  
Amid a wilderness of rocks and stones  
The tiller's hand, a hermit might have chosen,  
For opportunity presented, thence  
Far forth to send his wandering eye o'er land  
And ocean, and look down upon the works,  
The habitations, and the ways of men,  
Himself unseen ! But no tradition tells  
That ever hermit dipped his maple dish  
In the sweet spring that lurks 'mid yon green fields ;  
And no such visionary views belong  
To those who occupy and till the ground,  
High on that mountain where they long have dwelt  
A wedded pair in childless solitude.  
A house of stones collected on the spot,  
By rude hands built, with rocky knolls in front,  
Backed also by a ledge of rock, whose crest  
Of birch-trees waves over the chimney top ;  
A rough abode—in colour, shape, and size,  
Such as in unsafe times of border-war  
Might have been wished for and contrived, to elude  
The eye of roving plunderer—for their need  
Suffices ; and unshaken bears the assault  
Of their most dreaded foe, the strong South-west  
In anger blowing from the distant sea.  
—Alone within her solitary hut ;  
There, or within the compass of her fields,  
At any moment may the Dame be found,  
True as the stock-dove to her shallow nest  
And to the grove that holds it. She beguiles  
By intermingled work of house and field  
The summer's day, and winter's ; with success  
Not equal, but sufficient to maintain,  
Even at the worst, a smooth stream of content,  
Until the expected hour at which her Mate  
From the far-distant quarry's vault returns ;  
And by his converse crowns a silent day

With evening cheerfulness. In powers of mind,  
 In scale of culture, few among my flock  
 Hold lower rank than this sequestered pair :  
 But true humility descends from heaven ;  
 And that best gift of heaven hath fallen on them ;  
 Abundant recompense for every want.  
 —Stoop from your height, ye proud, and copy these !  
 Who, in their noiseless dwelling-place, can hear  
 The voice of wisdom whispering scripture texts  
 For the mind's government, or temper's peace ;  
 And recommending for their mutual need,  
 Forgiveness, patience, hope, and charity ! ”

“ Much was I pleased,” the grey-haired Wanderer said,  
 “ When to those shining fields our notice first  
 You turned ; and yet more pleased have from your lips  
 Gathered this fair report of them who dwell  
 In that retirement ; whither, by such course  
 Of evil hap and good as oft awaits  
 A tired way-faring man, once *I* was brought  
 While traversing alone yon mountain pass.  
 Dark on my road the autumnal evening fell,  
 And night succeeded with unusual gloom,  
 So hazardous that feet and hands became  
 Guides better than mine eyes—until a light  
 High in the gloom appeared, too high, methought,  
 For human habitation ; but I longed  
 To reach it, destitute of other hope.  
 I looked with steadiness as sailors look  
 On the north star, or watch-tower's distant lamp,  
 And saw the light—now fixed—and shifting now—  
 Not like a dancing meteor, but in line  
 Of never-varying motion, to and fro.  
 It is no night-fire of the naked hills,  
 Thought I—some friendly covert must be near.  
 With this persuasion thitherward my steps  
 I turn, and reach at last the guiding light ;  
 Joy to myself ! but to the heart of her  
 Who there was standing on the open hill,  
 (The same kind Matron whom your tongue hath praised)  
 Alarm and disappointment ! The alarm  
 Ceased, when she learned through what mishap I came,  
 And by what help had gained those distant fields.  
 Drawn from her cottage, on that æry height,  
 Bearing a lantern in her hand she stood,

Or paced the ground—to guide her Husband home,  
By that unwearied signal, kenne'd afar ;  
An anxious duty ! which the lofty site,  
Traversed but by a few irregular paths,  
Imposes, whensoever untoward chance  
Detains him after his accustomed hour  
Till night lies black upon the ground. ' But come,  
Come,' said the Matron, ' to our poor abode ;  
Those dark rocks hide it ! ' Entering, I beheld  
A blazing fire—beside a cleanly hearth  
Sate down ; and to her office, with leave asked,  
The Dame returned.

Or ere that glowing pile  
Of mountain turf required the builder's hand  
Its wasted splendour to repair, the door  
Opened, and she re-entered with glad looks,  
Her Helpmate following. Hospitable fare,  
Frank conversation, made the evening's treat :  
Need a bewildered traveller wish for more ?  
But more was given ; I studied as we sate  
By the bright fire, the good Man's form and face  
Not less than beautiful ; an open brow  
Of undisturbed humanity ; a cheek  
Suffused with something of a feminine hue ;  
Eyes beaming courtesy and mild regard ;  
But, in the quicker turns of the discourse,  
Expression slowly varying, that evinced  
A tardy apprehension. From a fount  
Lost, thought I, in the obscurities of time,  
But honoured once, those features and that mien  
May have descended, though I see them here.  
In such a man, so gentle and subdued,  
Withal so graceful in his gentleness,  
A race illustrious for heroic deeds,  
Humbled, but not degraded, may expire.  
This pleasing fancy (cherished and upheld  
By sundry recollections of such fall  
From high to low, ascent from low to high,  
As books record, and even the careless mind  
Cannot but notice among men and things)  
Went with me to the place of my repose.

Roused by the crowing cock at dawn of day,  
I yet had risen too late to interchange  
A morning salutation with my Host,

Gone forth already to the far-off seat  
 Of his day's work. 'Three dark mid-winter months  
 'Pass,' said the Matron, 'and I never see,  
 'Save when the sabbath brings its kind release,  
 'My Helpmate's face by light of day. He quits  
 'His door in darkness, nor till dusk returns.  
 'And, through Heaven's blessing, thus we gain the bread  
 'For which we pray; and for the wants provide  
 'Of sickness, accident, and helpless age.  
 'Companions have I many; many friends,  
 'Dependants, comforters—my wheel, my fire,  
 'All day the house-clock ticking in mine ear,  
 'The cackling hen, the tender chicken brood,  
 'And the wild birds that gather round my porch.  
 'The honest sheep-dog's countenance I read;  
 'With him can talk; nor blush to waste a word  
 'On creatures less intelligent and shrewd.  
 'And if the blustering wind that drives the clouds  
 'Care not for me, he lingers round my door,  
 'And makes me pastime when our tempers suit;—  
 'But, above all, my thoughts are my support,  
 'My comfort:—would that they were oftener fixed  
 'On what, for guidance in the way that leads  
 'To heaven, I know, by my Redeemer taught.'  
 The Matron ended—nor could I forbear  
 To exclaim—'O happy! yielding to the law  
 Of these privations, richer in the main!—  
 While thankless thousands are oppress'd and clogged  
 By ease and leisure; by the very wealth  
 And pride of opportunity made poor;  
 While tens of thousands falter in their path,  
 And sink, through utter want of cheering light;  
 For you the hours of labour do not flag;  
 For you each evening hath its shining star,  
 And every sabbath-day its golden sun.'"

"Yes!" said the Solitary with a smile  
 That seemed to break from an expanding heart,  
 "The untutored bird may found, and so construct,  
 And with such soft materials line, her nest  
 Fixed in the centre of a prickly brake,  
 That the thorns wound her not; they only guard.  
 Powers not unjustly likened to those gifts  
 Of happy instinct which the woodland bird  
 Shares with her species, nature's grace sometimes

Upon the individual doth confer,  
Among her higher creatures born and trained  
To use of reason. And, I own that, tired  
Of the ostentatious world—a swelling stage  
With empty actions and vain passions stuffed,  
And from the private struggles of mankind  
Hoping far less than I could wish to hope,  
Far less than once I trusted and believed—  
I love to hear of those, who, not contending  
Nor summoned to contend for virtue's prize,  
Miss not the humbler good at which they aim,  
Blest with a kindly faculty to blunt  
The edge of adverse circumstance, and turn  
Into their contraries the petty plagues  
And hindrances with which they stand beset.  
In early youth, among my native hills,  
I knew a Scottish Peasant who possessed  
A few small crofts of stone-encumbered ground ;  
Masses of every shape and size, that lay  
Scattered about under the mouldering walls  
Of a rough precipice ; and some, apart,  
In quarters unobnoxious to such chance,  
As if the moon had showered them down in spite.  
But he repined not. Though the plough was scared  
By these obstructions, 'round the shady stones  
'A fertilising moisture,' said the Swain,  
'Gathers, and is preserved ; and feeding dews  
'And damps, through all the drougthy summer day  
'From out their substance issuing, maintain  
'Herbage that never fails ; no grass springs up  
'So green, so fresh, so plentiful, as mine !'  
But thinly sown these natures ; rare, at least,  
The mutual aptitude of seed and soil  
That yields such kindly product. He, whose bed  
Perhaps yon loose sods cover, the poor Pensioner  
Brought yesterday from our sequestered dell  
Here to lie down in lasting quiet, he,  
If living now, could otherwise report  
Of rustic loneliness : that grey-haired Orphan—  
So call him, for humanity to him  
No parent was—feelingly could have told,  
In life, in death, what solitude can breed  
Of selfishness, and cruelty, and vice ;  
Or, if it breed not, hath not power to cure.  
—But your compliance, Sir ! with our request

My words too long have hindered."

Undeterred,

Perhaps incited rather, by these shocks,  
In no ungracious opposition, given  
To the confiding spirit of his own  
Experienced faith, the reverend Pastor said,  
Around him looking; "Where shall I begin?  
Who shall be first selected from my flock  
Gathered together in their peaceful fold?"  
He paused—and having lifted up his eyes  
To the pure heaven, he cast them down again  
Upon the earth beneath his feet; and spake:—

"To a mysteriously-united pair  
This place is consecrate; to Death and Life,  
And to the best affections that proceed  
From their conjunction; consecrate to faith  
In him who bled for man upon the cross;  
Hallowed to revelation; and no less  
To reason's mandates: and the hopes divine  
Of pure imagination;—above all,  
To charity, and love, that have provided,  
Within these precincts, a capacious bed  
And receptacle, open to the good  
And evil, to the just and the unjust;  
In which they find an equal resting-place:  
Even as the multitude of kindred brooks  
And streams, whose murmur fills this hollow vale,  
Whether their course be turbulent or smooth,  
Their waters clear or sullied, all are lost  
Within the bosom of yon crystal Lake,  
And end their journey in the same repose!

And blest are they who sleep; and we that know,  
While in a spot like this we breathe and walk,  
That all beneath us by the wings are covered  
Of motherly humanity, outspread  
And gathering all within their tender shade,  
Though loth and slow to come! A battle-field,  
In stillness left when slaughter is no more,  
With this compared, makes a strange spectacle!  
A dismal prospect yields the wild shore strewn  
With wrecks, and trod by feet of young and old  
Wandering about in miserable search  
Of friends or kindred, whom the angry sea  
Restores not to their prayer! Ah! who would think

That all the scattered subjects which compose  
Earth's melancholy vision through the space  
Of all her climes—these wretched, these depraved,  
To virtue lost, insensible of peace,  
From the delights of charity cut off,  
To pity dead, the oppressor and the oppressed;  
Tyrants who utter the destroying word,  
And slaves who will consent to be destroyed—  
Were of one species with the sheltered few,  
Who, with a dutiful and tender hand,  
Lodged, in a dear appropriated spot,  
This file of infants; some that never breathed  
The vital air; others, which, though allowed  
That privilege, did yet expire too soon,  
Or with too brief a warning, to admit  
Administration of the holy rite  
That lovingly consigns the babe to the arms  
Of Jesus, and his everlasting care.  
These that in trembling hope are laid apart;  
And the besprinkled nursling, unrequired  
Till he begins to smile upon the breast  
That feeds him; and the tottering little-one  
Taken from air and sunshine when the rose  
Of infancy first blooms upon his cheek;  
The thinking, thoughtless, school-boy; the bold youth  
Of soul impetuous, and the bashful maid  
Smitten while all the promises of life  
Are opening round her; those of middle age,  
Cast down while confident in strength they stand,  
Like pillars fixed more firmly, as might seem,  
And more secure, by very weight of all  
That, for support, rests on them; the decayed  
And burthensome; and lastly, that poor few  
Whose light of reason is with age extinct;  
The hopeful and the hopeless, first and last,  
The earliest summoned and the longest spared—  
Are here deposited, with tribute paid  
Various, but unto each some tribute paid;  
As if, amid these peaceful hills and groves,  
Society were touched with kind concern,  
And gentle 'Nature grieved, that one should die;'  
Or, if the change demanded no regret,  
Observed the liberating stroke—and blessed.

And whence that tribute? wherefore these regards?

Not from the naked *Heart* alone of Man  
 (Though claiming high distinction upon earth  
 As the sole spring and fountain-head of tears  
 His own peculiar utterance for distress  
 Or gladness)—No," the philosophic Priest  
 Continued, "'tis not in the vital seat  
 Of feeling to produce them, without aid  
 From the pure soul, the soul sublime and pure ;  
 With her two faculties of eye and ear,  
 The one by which a creature, whom his sins  
 Have rendered prone, can upward look to heaven ;  
 The other that empowers him to perceive  
 The voice of Deity, on height and plain,  
 Whispering those truths in stillness, which the WORD,  
 To the four quarters of the winds, proclaims.  
 Not without such assistance could the use  
 Of these benign observances prevail :  
 Thus are they born, thus fostered, thus maintained :  
 And by the care prospective of our wise  
 Forefathers, who, to guard against the shocks  
 The fluctuation and decay of things,  
 Embodied and established these high truths  
 In solemn institutions :—men convinced  
 That life is love and immortality,  
 The being one, and one the element.  
 There lies the channel, and original bed,  
 From the beginning, hollowed out and scooped  
 For Man's affections—else betrayed and lost,  
 And swallowed up 'mid deserts infinite !  
 This is the genuine course, the aim, and end  
 Of prescient reason ; all conclusions else  
 Are abject, vain, presumptuous, and perverse.  
 The faith partaking of those holy times,  
 Life, I repeat, is energy of love  
 Divine or human ; exercised in pain,  
 In strife, and tribulation ; and ordained,  
 If so approved and sanctified, to pass,  
 Through shades and silent rest, to endless joy."

## BOOK SIXTH

## THE CHURCHYARD AMONG THE MOUNTAINS

## ARGUMENT

Poet's Address to the State and Church of England—The Pastor not inferior to the ancient Worthies of the Church—He begins his Narratives with an instance of unrequited Love—Anguish of mind subdued,

and how—The lonely Miner—An instance of perseverance—Which leads by contrast to an example of abused talents, irresolution, and weakness—Solitary, applying this covertly to his own case, asks for an instance of some Stranger, whose dispositions may have led him to end his days here—Pastor, in answer, gives an account of the harmonising influence of Solitude upon two men of opposite principles, who had encountered agitations in public life—The rule by which Peace may be obtained expressed, and where—Solitary hints at an overpowering Fatality—Answer of the Pastor—What subjects he will exclude from his Narratives—Conversation upon this—Instance of an amiable character, a Female, and why given—Contrasted with this, a meek sufferer, from unguarded and betrayed love—Instance of heavier guilt, and its consequences to the Offender—With this instance of a Marriage Contract broken is contrasted one of a Widower, evidencing his faithful affection towards his deceased wife by his care of their female Children.

HAIL to the crown by Freedom shaped—to gird  
 An English Sovereign's brow! and to the throne  
 Whereon he sits! Whose deep foundations lie  
 In veneration and the people's love;  
 Whose steps are equity, whose seat is law.  
 —Hail to the State of England! And conjoin  
 With this a salutation as devout,  
 Made to the spiritual fabric of her Church;  
 Founded in truth; by blood of Martyrdom  
 Cemented; by the hands of Wisdom reared  
 In beauty of holiness, with ordered pomp,  
 Decent and unreprieved. The voice, that greets  
 The majesty of both, shall pray for both;  
 That, mutually protected and sustained,  
 They may endure long as the sea surrounds  
 This favoured Land, or sunshine warms her soil.

And O, ye swelling hills, and spacious plains  
 Besprent from shore to shore with steeple-towers,  
 And spires whose 'silent finger points to heaven';  
 Nor wanting, at wide intervals, the bulk  
 Of ancient minster lifted above the cloud  
 Of the dense air, which town or city breeds  
 To intercept the sun's glad beams—may ne'er  
 That true succession fail of English hearts,  
 Who, with ancestral feeling, can perceive  
 What in those holy structures ye possess  
 Of ornamental interest, and the charm  
 Of pious sentiment diffused afar,  
 And human charity, and social love.  
 —Thus never shall the indignities of time

Approach their reverend graces, unopposed ;  
Nor shall the elements be free to hurt  
Their fair proportions ; nor the blinder rage  
Of bigot zeal madly to overturn ;  
And, if the desolating hand of war  
Spare them, they shall continue to bestow  
Upon the thronged abodes of busy men  
(Depraved, and ever prone to fill the mind  
Exclusively with transitory things)  
An air and mien of dignified pursuit ;  
Of sweet civility, on rustic wilds.

The Poet, fostering for his native land  
Such hope, entreats that servants may abound  
Of those pure altars worthy ; ministers  
Detached from pleasure, to the love of gain  
Superior, insusceptible of pride,  
And by ambitious longings undisturbed ;  
Men, whose delight is where their duty leads  
Or fixes them ; whose least distinguished day  
Shines with some portion of that heavenly lustre  
Which makes the sabbath lovely in the sight  
Of blessed angels, pitying human cares.  
—And, as on earth it is the doom of truth  
To be perpetually attacked by foes  
Open or covert, be that priesthood still,  
For her defence, replenished with a band  
Of strenuous champions, in scholastic arts  
Thoroughly disciplined ; nor (if in course  
Of the revolving world's disturbances  
Cause should recur, which righteous Heaven avert !  
To meet such trial) from their spiritual sires  
Degenerate ; who, constrained to wield the sword  
Of disputation, shrunk not, though assailed  
With hostile din, and combating in sight  
Of angry umpires, partial and unjust ;  
And did, thereafter, bathe their hands in fire,  
So to declare the conscience satisfied :  
Nor for their bodies would accept release ;  
But, blessing God and praising him, bequeathed  
With their last breath, from out the smouldering flame,  
The faith which they by diligence had earned,  
Or, through illuminating grace, received,  
For their dear countrymen, and all mankind.  
O high example, constancy divine !

Even such a Man (inheriting the zeal  
And from the sanctity of elder times  
Not deviating,—a priest, the like of whom  
If multiplied, and in their stations set,  
Would o'er the bosom of a joyful land  
Spread true religion and her genuine fruits)  
Before me stood that day; on holy ground  
Fraught with the relics of mortality,  
Exalting tender themes, by just degrees  
To lofty raised; and to the highest, last;  
The head and mighty paramount of truths,—  
Immortal life, in never-fading worlds,  
For mortal creatures, conquered and secured.

That basis laid, those principles of faith  
Announced, as a preparatory act  
Of reverence done to the spirit of the place,  
The Pastor cast his eyes upon the ground;  
Not, as before, like one oppressed with awe  
But with a mild and social cheerfulness;  
Then to the Solitary turned, and spake.

"At morn or eve, in your retired domain,  
Perchance you not unfrequently have marked  
A Visitor—in quest of herbs and flowers;  
Too delicate employ, as would appear,  
For one, who, though of drooping mien, had yet  
From nature's kindness received a frame  
Robust as ever rural labour bred."

The Solitary answered: "Such a Form  
Full well I recollect. We often crossed  
Each other's path; but, as the Intruder seemed  
Fondly to prize the silence which he kept,  
And I as willingly did cherish mine,  
We met, and passed, like shadows. I have heard,  
From my good Host, that being crazed in brain  
By unrequited love, he scaled the rocks,  
Dived into caves, and pierced the matted woods,  
In hope to find some virtuous herb of power  
To cure his malady!"

The Vicar smiled,—  
"Alas! before to-morrow's sun goes down  
His habitation will be here: for him  
That open grave is destined."

"Died he then

Of pain and grief?" the Solitary asked,  
"Do not believe it; never could that be!"

"He loved," the Vicar answered, "deeply loved.  
Loved fondly, truly, fervently; and dared  
At length to tell his love, but sued in vain;  
Rejected, yea repelled; and, if with scorn  
Upon the haughty maiden's brow, 'tis but  
A high-prized plume which female Beauty wears  
In wantonness of conquest, or puts on  
To cheat the world, or from herself to hide  
Humiliation, when no longer free.

*That he could brook, and glory in;—but when*  
The tidings came that she whom he had wooed  
Was wedded to another, and his heart  
Was forced to rend away its only hope;  
Then, Pity could have scarcely found on earth  
An object worthier of regard than he,  
In the transition of that bitter hour!  
Lost was she, lost; nor could the Sufferer say  
That in the act of preference he had been  
Unjustly dealt with; but the Maid was gone!  
Had vanished from his prospects and desires;  
Not by translation to the heavenly choir  
Who have put off their mortal spoils—ah no!  
She lives another's wishes to complete,—  
'Joy be their lot, and happiness,' he cried,  
'His lot and hers, as misery must be mine!'

Such was that strong concussion; but the Man,  
Who trembled, trunk and limbs, like some huge oak  
By a fierce tempest shaken, soon resumed  
The stedfast quiet natural to a mind  
Of composition gentle and sedate,  
And, in its movements, circumspect and slow.  
To books, and to the long-forsaken desk,  
O'er which enchained by science he had loved  
To bend, he stoutly re-addressed himself,  
Resolved to quell his pain, and search for truth  
With keener appetite (if that might be)  
And closer industry. Of what ensued  
Within the heart no outward sign appeared  
Till a betraying sickliness was seen  
To tinge his cheek; and through his frame it crept  
With slow mutation unconcealable;  
Such universal change as autumn makes

In the fair body of a leafy grove,  
Discoloured, then divested.

'Tis affirmed

By poets skilled in nature's secret ways  
That Love will not submit to be controlled  
By mastery :—and the good Man lacked not friends  
Who strove to instil this truth into his mind,  
A mind in all heart-mysteries unversed.  
'Go to the hills,' said one, 'remit a while  
'This baneful diligence :—at early morn  
'Court the fresh air, explore the heaths and woods ;  
'And, leaving it to others to foretell,  
'By calculations sage, the ebb and flow  
'Of tides, and when the moon will be eclipsed,  
'Do you, for your own benefit, construct  
'A calendar of flowers, plucked as they blow  
'Where health abides, and cheerfulness, and peace.'  
The attempt was made ;—'tis needless to report  
How hopelessly ; but innocence is strong,  
And an entire simplicity of mind  
A thing most sacred in the eye of Heaven ;  
That opens, for such sufferers, relief  
Within the soul, fountains of grace divine ;  
And doth commend their weakness and disease  
To Nature's care, assisted in her office  
By all the elements that round her wait  
To generate, to preserve, and to restore ;  
And by her beautiful array of forms  
Shedding sweet influence from above ; or pure  
Delight exhaling from the ground they tread."

"Impute it not to impatience, if," exclaimed  
The Wanderer, "I infer that he was healed  
By perseverance in the course prescribed."

"You do not err : the powers, that had been lost  
By slow degrees, were gradually regained ;  
The fluttering nerves composed ; the beating heart  
In rest established ; and the jarring thoughts  
To harmony restored.—But yon dark mould  
Will cover him, in the fulness of his strength,  
Hastily smitten by a fever's force ;  
Yet not with stroke so sudden as refused  
Time to look back with tenderness on her  
Whom he had loved in passion ; and to send  
Some farewell words—with one, but one, request ;

That, from his dying hand, she would accept  
Of his possessions that which most he prized ;  
A book, upon whose leaves some chosen plants,  
By his own hand disposed with nicest care,  
In undecaying beauty were preserved ;  
Mute register, to him, of time and place,  
And various fluctuations in the breast ;  
To her, a monument of faithful love  
Conquered, and in tranquillity retained !

Close to his destined habitation, lies  
One who achieved a humbler victory,  
Though marvellous in its kind. A place there is  
High in these mountains, that allured a band  
Of keen adventurers to unite their pains  
In search of precious ore : they tried, were foiled--  
And all desisted, all, save him alone.  
He, taking counsel of his own clear thoughts,  
And trusting only to his own weak hands,  
Urged unremittingly the stubborn work,  
Unseconded, uncountenanced ; then, as time  
Passed on, while still his lonely efforts found  
No recompense, derided ; and at length,  
By many pitied, as insane of mind ;  
By others dreaded as the luckless thrall  
Of subterranean Spirits feeding hope  
By various mockery of sight and sound ;  
Hope after hope, encouraged and destroyed.  
—But when the lord of seasons had matured  
The fruits of earth through space of twice ten years,  
The mountain's entrails offered to his view  
And trembling grasp the long-deferred reward.  
Not with more transport did Columbus greet  
A world, his rich discovery ! But our Swain,  
A very hero till his point was gained,  
Proved all unable to support the weight  
Of prosperous fortune. On the fields he looked  
With an unsettled liberty of thought,  
Wishes and endless schemes ; by daylight walked  
Giddy and restless ; ever and anon  
Quaffed in his gratitude immoderate cups ;  
And truly might be said to die of joy !  
He vanished ; but conspicuous to this day  
The path remains that linked his cottage-door  
To the mine's mouth ; a long and slanting track,

Upon the rugged mountain's stony side,  
Worn by his daily visits to and from  
The darksome centre of a constant hope.  
This vestige, neither force of beating rain,  
Nor the vicissitudes of frost and thaw  
Shall cause to fade, till ages pass away ;  
And it is named, in memory of the event,  
The PATH OF PERSEVERANCE."

"Thou from whom  
Man has his strength," exclaimed the Wanderer, "oh !  
Do thou direct it ! To the virtuous grant  
The penetrative eye which can perceive  
In this blind world the guiding vein of hope ;  
That, like this Labourer, such may dig their way,  
' Unshaken, unseduced, unterrified ;'  
Grant to the wise *his* firmness of resolve !"

"That prayer were not superfluous," said the Priest,  
"Amid the noblest relics, proudest dust,  
That Westminster, for Britain's glory, holds  
Within the bosom of her awful pile,  
Ambitiously collected. Yet the sigh,  
Which wafts that prayer to heaven, is due to all,  
Wherever laid, who living fell below  
Their virtue's humbler mark ; a sigh of *pain*  
If to the opposite extreme they sank.  
How would you pity her who yonder rests ;  
Him, farther off ; the pair, who here are laid ;  
But, above all, that mixture of earth's mould  
Whom sight of this green hillock to my mind  
Recalls !

*He* lived not till his locks were nipped  
By seasonable frost of age ; nor died  
Before his temples, prematurely forced  
To mix the manly brown with silver grey,  
Gave obvious instance of the sad effect  
Produced, when thoughtless Folly hath usurped  
The natural crown that sage Experience wears  
Gay, volatile, ingenious, quick to learn,  
And prompt to exhibit all that he possessed  
Or could perform ; a zealous actor, hired  
Into the troop of mirth, a soldier, sworn  
Into the lists of giddy enterprise—  
Such was he ; yet, as if within his frame  
Two several souls alternately had lodged,

Two sets of manners could the Youth put on ;  
And, fraught with antics as the Indian bird  
That writhes and chatters in her wiry cage,  
Was graceful, when it pleased him, smooth and still  
As the mute swan that floats adown the stream,  
Or, on the waters of the unruffled lake,  
Anchors her placid beauty. Not a leaf,  
That flutters on the bough, lighter than he ;  
And not a flower, that droops in the green shade,  
More winningly reserved ! If ye enquire  
How such consummate elegance was bred  
Amid these wilds, this answer may suffice ;  
'Twas Nature's will ; who sometimes undertakes,  
For the reproof of human vanity,  
Art to outstrip in her peculiar walk.  
Hence, for this Favourite—lavishly endowed  
With personal gifts, and bright instinctive wit,  
While both, embellishing each other, stood  
Yet farther recommended by the charm  
Of fine demeanour, and by dance and song,  
And skill in letters—every fancy shaped  
Fair expectations ; nor, when to the world's  
Capacious field forth went the Adventurer, there  
Were he and his attainments overlooked,  
Or scantily rewarded ; but all hopes,  
Cherished for him, he suffered to depart,  
Like blighted buds ; or clouds that mimicked land  
Before the sailor's eye ; or diamond drops  
That sparkling decked the morning grass ; or aught  
That *was* attractive, and hath ceased to be !

Yet, when this Prodigal returned, the rites  
Of joyful greeting were on him bestowed,  
Who, by humiliation undeterred,  
Sought for his weariness a place of rest  
Within his Father's gates.—Whence came he ?—clothed  
In tattered garb, from hovels where abides  
Necessity, the stationary host  
Of vagrant poverty ; from rifted barns  
Where no one dwells but the wide-staring owl  
And the owl's prey ; from these bare haunts, to which  
He had descended from the proud saloon,  
He came, the ghost of beauty and of health,  
The wreck of gaiety ! But soon revived  
In strength, in power refitted, he renewed

His suit to Fortune ; and she smiled again  
Upon a fickle Ingrate. Thrice he rose,  
Thrice sank as willingly. For he—whose nerves  
Were used to thrill with pleasure, while his voice  
Softly accompanied the tuneful harp,  
By the nice finger of fair ladies touched  
In glittering halls—was able to derive  
No less enjoyment from an abject choice.  
Who happier for the moment—who more blithe  
Than this fallen Spirit ? in those dreary holds  
His talents lending to exalt the freaks  
Of merry-making beggars,—nor provoked  
To laughter multiplied in louder peals  
By his malicious wit ; then, all enchained  
With mute astonishment, themselves to see  
In their own arts outdone, their fame eclipsed,  
As by the very presence of the Fiend  
Who dictates and inspires illusive feats,  
For knavish purposes ! The city, too,  
(With shame I speak it) to her guilty bowers  
Allured him, sunk so low in self-respect  
As there to linger, there to eat his bread,  
Hired minstrel of voluptuous blandishment ;  
Charming the air with skill of hand or voice,  
Listen who would, be wrought upon who might,  
Sincerely wretched hearts, or falsely gay.  
—Such the too frequent tenor of his boast  
In ears that relished the report ;—but all  
Was from his Parents happily concealed ;  
Who saw enough for blame and pitying love.  
They also were permitted to receive  
His last, repentant breath ; and closed his eyes,  
No more to open on that irksome world  
Where he had long existed in the state  
Of a young fowl beneath one mother hatched,  
Though from another sprung, different in kind :  
Where he had lived, and could not cease to live,  
Distracted in propensity ; content  
With neither element of good or ill ;  
And yet in both rejoicing ; man unblest ;  
Of contradictions infinite the slave,  
Till his deliverance, when Mercy made him  
One with himself, and one with them that sleep."

"'Tis strange," observed the Solitary, "strange  
It seems, and scarcely less than pitiful,

That in a land where charity provides  
For all that can no longer feed themselves,  
A man like this should choose to bring his shame  
To the parental door ; and with his sighs  
Infect the air which he had freely breathed  
In happy infancy. He could not pine,  
Through lack of converse ; no—he must have found  
Abundant exercise for thought and speech,  
In his dividual being, self-reviewed,  
Self-catechised, self-punished.—Some there are  
Who, drawing near their final home, and much  
And daily longing that the same were reached,  
Would rather shun than seek the fellowship  
Of kindred mould.—Such haply here are laid ? ”

“ Yes,” said the Priest, “ the Genius of our hills—  
Who seems, by these stupendous barriers cast  
Round his domain, desirous not alone  
To keep his own, but also to exclude  
All other progeny—doth sometimes lure,  
Even by his studied depth of privacy,  
The unhappy alien hoping to obtain  
Concealment, or seduced by wish to find,  
In place from outward molestation free,  
Helps to internal ease. Of many such  
Could I discourse ; but as their stay was brief,  
So their departure only left behind  
Fancies, and loose conjectures. Other trace  
Survives, for worthy mention, of a pair  
Who, from the pressure of their several fates,  
Meeting as strangers, in a petty town  
Whose blue roofs ornament a distant reach  
Of this far-winding vale, remained as friends  
True to their choice ; and gave their bones in trust  
To this loved cemetery, here to lodge  
With unescutcheoned privacy interred  
Far from the family vault.—A Chieftain one  
By right of birth ; within whose spotless breast  
The fire of ancient Caledonia burned :  
He, with the foremost whose impatience hailed  
The Stuart, landing to resume, by force  
Of arms, the crown which bigotry had lost,  
Aroused his clan ; and, fighting at their head,  
With his brave sword endeavoured to prevent  
Culloden's fatal overthrow. Escaped

From that disastrous rout, to foreign shores  
He fled ; and when the lenient hand of time  
Those troubles had appeased, he sought and gained,  
For his obscured condition, an obscure  
Retreat, within this nook of English ground.

The other, born in Britain's southern tract,  
Had fixed his milder loyalty, and placed  
His gentler sentiments of love and hate,  
There, where *they* placed them who in conscience prized  
The new succession, as a line of kings  
Whose oath had virtue to protect the land  
Against the dire assaults of papacy  
And arbitrary rule. But launch thy bark  
On the distempered flood of public life,  
And cause for most rare triumph will be thine  
If, spite of keenest eye and steadiest hand,  
The stream, that bears thee forward, prove not, soon  
Or late, a perilous master. He—who oft,  
Beneath the battlements and stately trees  
That round his mansion cast a sober gloom,  
Had moralised on this, and other truths  
Of kindred import, pleased and satisfied—  
Was forced to vent his wisdom with a sigh  
Heaved from the heart in fortune's bitterness,  
When he had crushed a plentiful estate  
By ruinous contest, to obtain a seat  
In Britain's senate. Fruitless was the attempt :  
And while the uproar of that desperate strife  
Continued yet to vibrate on his ear,  
The vanquished Whig, under a borrowed name,  
(For the mere sound and echo of his own  
Haunted him with sensations of disgust  
That he was glad to lose) slunk from the world  
To the deep shade of those untravelled Wilds ;  
In which the Scottish Laird had long possessed  
An undisturbed abode. Here, then, they met,  
Two doughty champions ; flaming Jacobite  
And sullen Hanoverian ! You might think  
That losses and vexations, less severe  
Than those which they had severally sustained,  
Would have inclined each to abate his zeal  
For his ungrateful cause ; no,—I have heard  
My reverend Father tell that, 'mid the calm  
Of that small town encountering thus, they filled,

Daily, its bowling-green with harmless strife ;  
Plagued with uncharitable thoughts the church ;  
And vexed the market-place. But in the breasts  
Of these opponents gradually was wrought,  
With little change of general sentiment,  
Such leaning towards each other, that their days  
By choice were spent in constant fellowship ;  
And if, at times, they fretted with the yoke,  
Those very bickerings made them love it more.

A favourite boundary to their lengthened walks  
This Churchyard was. And, whether they had come  
Treading their path in sympathy and linked  
In social converse, or by some short space  
Discreetly parted to preserve the peace,  
One spirit seldom failed to extend its sway  
Over both minds, when they awhile had marked  
The visible quiet of this holy ground,  
And breathed its soothing air :—the spirit of hope  
And saintly magnanimity ; that—spurning  
The field of selfish difference and dispute,  
And every care which transitory things,  
Earth and the kingdoms of the earth, create—  
Doth, by a rapture of forgetfulness,  
Preclude forgiveness, from the praise debarred,  
Which else the Christian virtue might have claimed.

There live who yet remember here to have seen  
Their courtly figures, seated on the stump  
Of an old yew, their favourite resting-place.  
But as the remnant of the long-lived tree  
Was disappearing by a swift decay,  
They, with joint care, determined to erect,  
Upon its site, a dial, that might stand  
For public use preserved, and thus survive  
As their own private monument : for this  
Was the particular spot, in which they wished  
(And Heaven was pleased to accomplish the desire)  
That, undivided, their remains should lie.  
So, where the mouldered tree had stood, was raised  
Yon structure, framing, with the ascent of steps  
That to the decorated pillar lead,  
A work of art more sumptuous than might seem  
To suit this place ; yet built in no proud scorn  
Of rustic homeliness ; they only aimed  
To ensure for it respectful guardianship.

Around the margin of the plate, whereon  
 The shadow falls to note the stealthy hours,  
 Winds an inscriptive legend."—At these words  
 Thither we turned; and gathered, as we read,  
 The appropriate sense, in Latin numbers couched:  
*'Time flies; it is his melancholy task,  
 To bring, and bear away, delusive hopes,  
 And re-produce the troubles he destroys.  
 But, while his blindness thus is occupied,  
 Discerning Mortal! do thou serve the will  
 Of Time's eternal Master, and that peace,  
 Which the world wants, shall be for thee confirmed!'*

"Smooth verse, inspired by no unlettered Muse,"  
 Exclaimed the Sceptic, "and the strain of thought  
 Accords with nature's language;—the soft voice  
 Of yon white torrent falling down the rocks  
 Speaks, less distinctly, to the same effect.  
 If, then, their blended influence be not lost  
 Upon our hearts, not wholly lost, I grant,  
 Even upon mine, the more are we required  
 To feel for those among our fellow-men,  
 Who, offering no obeisance to the world,  
 Are yet made desperate by 'too quick a sense  
 Of constant infelicity,' cut off  
 From peace like exiles on some barren rock,  
 Their life's appointed prison; not more free  
 Than sentinels, between two armies, set,  
 With nothing better, in the chill night air,  
 Than their own thoughts to comfort them. Say why  
 That ancient story of Prometheus chained  
 To the bare rock, on frozen Caucasus;  
 The vulture, the inexhaustible repast  
 Drawn from his vitals? Say what meant the woes  
 By Tantalus entailed upon his race,  
 And the dark sorrows of the line of Thebes?  
 Fictions in form, but in their substance truths,  
 Tremendous truths! familiar to the men  
 Of long-past times, nor obsolete in ours.  
 Exchange the shepherd's frock of native grey  
 For robes with regal purple tinged; convert  
 The crook into a sceptre; give the pomp  
 Of circumstance; and here the tragic Muse  
 Shall find apt subjects for her highest art.  
 Amid the groves, under the shadowy hills,

The generations are prepared ; the pangs,  
 The internal pangs, are ready ; the dread strife  
 Of poor humanity's afflicted will  
 Struggling in vain with ruthless destiny."

"Though," said the Priest in answer, "these be terms  
 Which a divine philosophy rejects,  
 We, whose established and unailing trust  
 Is in controlling Providence, admit  
 That, through all stations, human life abounds  
 With mysteries ;—for, if Faith were left untried,  
 How could the might, that lurks within her, then  
 Be shown ? her glorious excellence—that ranks  
 Among the first of Powers and Virtues—proved ?  
 Our system is not fashioned to preclude  
 That sympathy which you for others ask ;  
 And I could tell, not travelling for my theme  
 Beyond these humble graves, of grievous crimes  
 And strange disasters ; but I pass them by,  
 Loth to disturb what Heaven hath hushed in peace.  
 —Still less, far less, am I inclined to treat  
 Of Man degraded in his Maker's sight  
 By the deformities of brutish vice :  
 For, in such portraits, though a vulgar face  
 And a coarse outside of repulsive life  
 And unassuming manners might at once  
 Be recognised by all"—"Ah ! do not think,"  
 The Wanderer somewhat eagerly exclaimed,  
 "Wish could be ours that you, for such poor gain,  
 (Gain shall I call it ?—gain of what ?—for whom ?)  
 Should breathe a word tending to violate  
 Your own pure spirit. Not a step we look for  
 In slight of that forbearance and reserve  
 Which common human-heartedness inspires,  
 And mortal ignorance and frailty claim,  
 Upon this sacred ground, if nowhere else."

"True," said the Solitary, "be it far  
 From us to infringe the laws of charity.  
 Let judgment here in mercy be pronounced ;  
 This, self-respecting Nature prompts, and this  
 Wisdom enjoins ; but if the thing we seek  
 Be genuine knowledge, bear we then in mind  
 How, from his lofty throne, the sun can fling  
 Colours as bright on exhalations bred  
 By weedy pool or pestilential swamp,

As by the rivulet sparkling where it runs,  
Or the pellucid lake."

"Small risk," said I,  
"Of such illusion do we here incur;  
Temptation here is none to exceed the truth;  
No evidence appears that they who rest  
Within this ground, were covetous of praise,  
Or of remembrance even, deserved or not.  
Green is the Churchyard, beautiful and green,  
Ridge rising gently by the side of ridge,  
A heaving surface, almost wholly free  
From interruption of sepulchral stones,  
And mantled o'er with aboriginal turf  
And everlasting flowers. These Dalesmen trust  
The lingering gleam of their departed lives  
To oral record, and the silent heart;  
Depositories faithful and more kind  
Than fondest epitaph: for, if those fail,  
What boots the sculptured tomb? And who can blame,  
Who rather would not envy, men that feel  
This mutual confidence; if, from such source,  
The practice flow,—if thence, or from a deep  
And general humility in death?  
Nor should I much condemn it, if it spring  
From disregard of time's destructive power,  
As only capable to prey on things  
Of earth, and human nature's mortal part.

Yet—in less simple districts, where we see  
Stone lift its forehead emulous of stone  
In courting notice; and the ground all paved  
With commendations of departed worth;  
Reading, where'er we turn, of innocent lives,  
Of each domestic charity fulfilled,  
And sufferings meekly borne—I, for my part,  
Though with the silence pleased that here prevails,  
Among those fair recitals also range,  
Soothed by the natural spirit which they breathe.  
And, in the centre of a world whose soil  
Is rank with all unkindness, compassed round  
With such memorials, I have sometimes felt,  
It was no momentary happiness  
To have *one* Enclosure where the voice that speaks  
In envy or detraction is not heard;  
Which malice may not enter; where the traces

Of evil inclinations are unknown ;  
 Where love and pity tenderly unite  
 With resignation ; and no jarring tone  
 Intrudes, the peaceful concert to disturb  
 Of amity and gratitude."

"Thus sanctioned,"

The Pastor said, "I willingly confine  
 My narratives to subjects that excite  
 Feelings with these accordant ; love, esteem,  
 And admiration ; lifting up a veil,  
 A sunbeam introducing among hearts  
 Retired and covert ; so that ye shall have  
 Clear images before your gladdened eyes  
 Of nature's unambitious underwood,  
 And flowers that prosper in the shade. And when  
 I speak of such among my flock as swerved  
 Or fell, those only shall be singled out  
 Upon whose lapse, or error, something more  
 Than brotherly forgiveness may attend ;  
 To such will we restrict our notice, else  
 Better my tongue were mute.

And yet there are,

I feel, good reasons why we should not leave  
 Wholly untraced a more forbidding way.  
 For, strength to persevere and to support,  
 And energy to conquer and repel—  
 These elements of virtue, that declare  
 The native grandeur of the human soul—  
 Are oft-times not unprofitably shown  
 In the perverseness of a selfish course :  
 Truth every day exemplified, no less  
 In the grey cottage by the murmuring stream  
 Than in fantastic conqueror's roving camp,  
 Or 'mid the factious senate, unappalled  
 Whoe'er may sink, or rise—to sink again,  
 As merciless proscription ebbs and flows.

There," said the Vicar, pointing as he spake,  
 "A woman rests in peace ; surpassed by few  
 In power of mind, and eloquent discourse.  
 Tall was her stature ; her complexion dark  
 And saturnine ; her head not raised to hold  
 Converse with heaven, nor yet deprest towards earth,  
 But in projection carried, as she walked  
 For ever musing. Sunken were her eyes ;

Wrinkled and furrowed with habitual thought  
Was her broad forehead ; like the brow of one  
Whose visual nerve shrinks from a painful glare  
Of overpowering light.—While yet a child,  
She, 'mid the humble flowerets of the vale,  
Towered like the imperial thistle, not unfurnished  
With its appropriate grace, yet rather seeking  
To be admired, than coveted and loved.  
Even at that age she ruled, a sovereign queen,  
Over her comrades ; else their simple sports,  
Wanting all relish for her strenuous mind,  
Had crossed her only to be shunned with scorn.  
—Oh ! pang of sorrowful regret for those  
Whom, in their youth, sweet study has enthralled,  
That they have lived for harsher servitude,  
Whether in soul, in body, or estate !  
Such doom was hers ; yet nothing could subdue  
Her keen desire of knowledge, nor efface  
Those brighter images by books imprint  
Upon her memory, faithfully as stars  
That occupy their places, and, though oft  
Hidden by clouds, and oft bedimmed by haze,  
Are not to be extinguished, nor impaired.

Two passions, both degenerate, for they both  
Began in honour, gradually obtained  
Rule over her, and vexed her daily life ;  
An unremitting, avaricious thrift ;  
And a strange thralldom of maternal love,  
That held her spirit, in its own despite,  
Bound—by vexation, and regret, and scorn,  
Constrained forgiveness, and relenting vows,  
And tears, in pride suppressed, in shame concealed—  
To a poor dissolute Son, her only child.  
—Her wedded days had opened with mishap,  
Whence dire dependence. What could she perform  
To shake the burthen off ? Ah ! there was felt,  
Indignantly, the weakness of her sex.  
She mused, resolved, adhered to her resolve ;  
The hand grew slack in alms-giving, the heart  
Closed by degrees to charity ; heaven's blessing  
Not seeking from that source, she placed her trust  
In ceaseless pains—and strictest parsimony  
Which sternly hoarded all that could be spared,  
From each day's need, out of each day's least gain.

Thus all was re-established, and a pile  
 Constructed, that sufficed for every end,  
 Save the contentment of the builder's mind ;  
 A mind by nature indisposed to aught  
 So placid, so inactive, as content ;  
 A mind intolerant of lasting peace,  
 And cherishing the pang her heart deplored.  
 Dread life of conflict ! which I oft compared  
 To the agitation of a brook that runs  
 Down a rocky mountain, buried now and lost  
 In silent pools, now in strong eddies chained ;  
 But never to be charmed to gentleness :  
 Its best attainment fits of such repose  
 As timid eyes might shrink from fathoming.

A sudden illness seized her in the strength  
 Of life's autumnal season.—Shall I tell  
 How on her bed of death the Matron lay,  
 To Providence submissive, so she thought ;  
 But fretted, vexed, and wrought upon, almost  
 To anger, by the malady that griped  
 Her prostrate frame with unrelaxing power,  
 As the fierce eagle fastens on the lamb ?  
 She prayed, she moaned ;—her husband's sister watched  
 Her dreary pillow, waited on her needs ;  
 And yet the very sound of that kind foot  
 Was anguish to her ears ! 'And must she rule,'  
 This was the death-doomed Woman heard to say  
 In bitterness, 'and must she rule and reign,  
 'Sole Mistress of this house, when I am gone ?  
 'Tend what I tended, calling it her own !'  
 Enough ;—I fear, too much.—One vernal evening,  
 While she was yet in prime of health and strength,  
 I well remember, while I passed her door  
 Alone, with loitering step, and upward eye  
 Turned towards the planet Jupiter that hung  
 Above the centre of the Vale, a voice  
 Roused me, her voice ; it said, 'That glorious star  
 'In its untroubled element will shine  
 'As now it shines, when we are laid in earth  
 'And safe from all our sorrows.' With a sigh  
 She spake, yet, I believe, not unsustained  
 By faith in glory that shall far transcend  
 Aught by these perishable heavens disclosed  
 To sight or mind. Nor less than care divine

Is divine mercy. She, who had rebelled,  
Was into meekness softened and subdued ;  
Did, after trials not in vain prolonged,  
With resignation sink into the grave ;  
And her uncharitable acts, I trust,  
And harsh unkindnesses are all forgiven,  
Tho', in this Vale, remembered with deep awe "

THE Vicar paused ; and toward a seat advanced,  
A long stone-seat, fixed in the Churchyard wall ;  
Part shaded by cool sycamore, and part  
Offering a sunny resting-place to them  
Who seek the House of worship, while the bells  
Yet ring with all their voices, or before  
The last hath ceased its solitary knoll.  
Beneath the shade we all sate down ; and there,  
His office, uninvited, he resumed.

" As on a sunny bank, a tender lamb  
Lurks in safe shelter from the winds of March,  
Screened by its parent, so that little mound  
Lies guarded by its neighbour ; the small heap  
Speaks for itself ; an Infant there doth rest ;  
The sheltering hillock is the Mother's grave.  
If mild discourse, and manners that conferred  
A natural dignity on humblest rank ;  
If gladsome spirits, and benignant looks,  
That for a face not beautiful did more  
Than beauty for the fairest face can do ;  
And if religious tenderness of heart,  
Grieving for sin, and penitential tears  
Shed when the clouds had gathered and distained  
The spotless ether of a maiden life ;  
If these may make a hallowed spot of earth  
More holy in the sight of God or Man ;  
Then, o'er that mould, a sanctity shall brood  
Till the stars sicken at the day of doom.

Ah ! what a warning for a thoughtless man,  
Could field or grove, could any spot of earth,  
Show to his eye an image of the pangs  
Which it hath witnessed ; render back an echo  
Of the sad steps by which it hath been trod !  
There, by her innocent Baby's precious grave,  
And on the very turf that roofs her own,

The Mother oft was seen to stand, or kneel  
 In the broad day, a weeping Magdalene.  
 Now she is not ; the swelling turf reports  
 Of the fresh shower, but of poor Ellen's tears  
 Is silent ; nor is any vestige left  
 Of the path worn by mournful tread of her  
 Who, at her heart's light bidding, once had moved  
 In virgin fearlessness, with step that seemed  
 Caught from the pressure of elastic turf  
 Upon the mountains gemmed with morning dew,  
 In the prime hour of sweetest scents and airs.  
 —Serious and thoughtful was her mind ; and yet,  
 By reconciliation exquisite and rare,  
 The form, port, motions, of this Cottage-girl  
 Were such as might have quickened and inspired  
 A Titian's hand, address to picture forth  
 Oread or Dryad glancing through the shade  
 What time the hunter's earliest horn is heard  
 Startling the golden hills.

A wide-spread elm  
 Stands in our valley, named THE JOYFUL TREE ;  
 From dateless usage which our peasants hold  
 Of giving welcome to the first of May  
 By dances round its trunk.—And if the sky  
 Permit, like honours, dance and song, are paid  
 To the Twelfth Night, beneath the frosty stars  
 Or the clear moon. The queen of these gay sports,  
 If not in beauty yet in sprightly air,  
 Was hapless Ellen.—No one touched the ground  
 So deftly, and the nicest maiden's locks  
 Less gracefully were braided ;—but this praise,  
 Methinks, would better suit another place.

She loved, and fondly deemed herself beloved.  
 —The road is dim, the current unperceived,  
 The weakness painful and most pitiful,  
 By which a virtuous woman, in pure youth,  
 May be delivered to distress and shame.  
 Such fate was hers.—The last time Ellen danced,  
 Among her equals, round THE JOYFUL TREE,  
 She bore a secret burthen ; and full soon  
 Was left to tremble for a breaking vow,—  
 Then, to bewail a sternly-broken vow,  
 Alone, within her widowed Mother's house.  
 It was the season of unfolding leaves,

Of days advancing toward their utmost length,  
And small birds singing happily to mates  
Happy as they. With spirit-saddening power  
Winds pipe through fading woods ; but those blithe notes  
Strike the deserted to the heart ; I speak  
Of what I know, and what we feel within.

—Beside the cottage in which Ellen dwelt  
Stands a tall ash-tree ; to whose topmost twig  
A thrush resorts, and annually chants,  
At morn and evening from that naked perch,  
While all the undergrove is thick with leaves,  
A time-beguiling ditty, for delight  
Of his fond partner, silent in the nest.  
—‘ Ah why,’ said Ellen, sighing to herself,  
‘ Why do not words, and kiss, and solemn pledge ;  
‘ And nature that is kind in woman’s breast,  
‘ And reason that in man’s is wise and good,  
‘ And fear of him who is a righteous judge ;  
‘ Why do not these prevail for human life,  
‘ To keep two hearts together, that began  
‘ Their spring-time with one love, and that have need  
‘ Of mutual pity and forgiveness, sweet  
‘ To grant, or be received ; while that poor bird—  
‘ O come and hear him ! Thou who hast to me  
‘ Been faithless, hear him, though a lowly creature,  
‘ One of God’s simple children that yet know not  
‘ The universal Parent, how he sings  
‘ As if he wished the firmament of heaven  
‘ Should listen, and give back to him the voice  
‘ Of his triumphant constancy and love ;  
‘ The proclamation that he makes, how far  
‘ His darkness doth transcend our fickle light !’

Such was the tender passage, not by me  
Repeated without loss of simple phrase,  
Which I perused, even as the words had been  
Committed by forsaken Ellen’s hand  
To the blank margin of a Valentine,  
Bedropped with tears. ‘Twill please you to be told  
That, studiously withdrawing from the eye  
Of all companionship, the Sufferer yet  
In lonely reading found a meek resource :  
How thankful for the warmth of summer days,  
When she could slip into the cottage-barn,  
And find a secret oratory there ;

Or, in the garden, under friendly veil  
 Of their long twilight, pore upon her book  
 By the last lingering help of the open sky  
 Until dark night dismissed her to her bed !  
 Thus did a waking fancy sometimes lose  
 The unconquerable pang of despised love.

A kindlier passion opened on her soul  
 When that poor Child was born. Upon its face  
 She gazed as on a pure and spotless gift  
 Of unexpected promise, where a grief  
 Or dread was all that had been thought of,—joy  
 Far livelier than bewildered traveller feels,  
 Amid a perilous waste that all night long  
 Hath harassed him toiling through fearful storm,  
 When he beholds the first pale speck serene  
 Of day-spring, in the gloomy east, revealed,  
 And greets it with thanksgiving. 'Till this hour,  
 Thus, in her Mother's hearing Ellen spake,  
 'There was a stony region in my heart ;  
 'But He, at whose command the parched rock  
 'Was smitten, and poured forth a quenching stream,  
 'Hath softened that obduracy, and made  
 'Unlooked-for gladness in the desert place,  
 'To save the perishing ; and, henceforth, I breathe  
 'The air with cheerful spirit, for thy sake,  
 'My infant ! and for that good Mother dear,  
 'Who bore me ; and hath prayed for me in vain ;—  
 'Yet not in vain ; it shall not be in vain.'  
 She spake, nor was the assurance unfulfilled ;  
 And if heart-rending thoughts would oft return,  
 They stayed not long.—The blameless Infant grew ;  
 The Child whom Ellen and her Mother loved  
 They soon were proud of ; tended it and nursed ;  
 A soothing comforter, although forlorn ;  
 Like a poor singing-bird from distant lands ;  
 Or a choice shrub, which he, who passes by  
 With vacant mind, not seldom may observe  
 Fair-flowering in a thinly-peopled house,  
 Whose window, somewhat sadly, it adorns.

Through four months' space the Infant drew its food  
 From the maternal breast ; then scruples rose ;  
 Thoughts, which the rich are free from, came and crossed  
 The fond affection. She no more could bear  
 By her offence to lay a twofold weight

On a kind parent willing to forget  
Their slender means : so, to that parent's care  
Trusting her child, she left their common home,  
And undertook with dutiful content  
A Foster-mother's office.

'Tis, perchance,  
Unknown to you that in these simple vales  
The natural feeling of equality  
Is by domestic service unimpaired ;  
Yet, though such service be, with us, removed  
From sense of degradation, not the less  
The ungentle mind can easily find means  
To impose severe restraints and laws unjust,  
Which hapless Ellen now was doomed to feel :  
For (blinded by an over-anxious dread  
Of such excitement and divided thought  
As with her office would but ill accord)  
The pair, whose infant she was bound to nurse,  
Forbade her all communion with her own :  
Week after week, the mandate they enforced.  
—So near ! yet not allowed, upon that sight  
To fix her eyes—alas ! 'twas hard to bear !  
But worse affliction must be borne—far worse ;  
For 'tis Heaven's will—that, after a disease  
Begun and ended within three days' space,  
Her child should die ; as Ellen now exclaimed,  
Her own—deserted child !—Once, only once,  
She saw it in that mortal malady ;  
And, on the burial-day, could scarcely gain  
Permission to attend its obsequies.  
She reached the house, last of the funeral train ;  
And some one, as she entered, having chanced  
To urge unthinkingly their prompt departure,  
'Nay,' said she, with commanding look, a spirit  
Of anger never seen in her before,  
'Nay, ye must wait my time !' and down she sate,  
And by the unclosed coffin kept her seat  
Weeping and looking, looking on and weeping,  
Upon the last sweet slumber of her Child,  
Until at length her soul was satisfied.

You see the Infant's Grave ; and to this spot,  
The Mother, oft as she was sent abroad,  
On whatsoever errand, urged her steps :  
Hither she came ; here stood, and sometimes knelt

In the broad day, a rueful Magdalene !  
 So call her ; for not only she bewailed  
 A mother's loss, but mourned in bitterness  
 Her own transgression ; penitent sincere  
 As ever raised to heaven a streaming eye ?  
 —At length the parents of the foster-child,  
 Noting that in despite of their commands  
 She still renewed and could not but renew  
 Those visitations, ceased to send her forth ;  
 Or, to the garden's narrow bounds, confined.  
 I failed not to remind them that they erred ;  
 For holy Nature might not thus be crossed,  
 Thus wronged in woman's breast : in vain I pleaded—  
 But the green stalk of Ellen's life was snapped,  
 And the flower drooped ; as every eye could see,  
 It hung its head in mortal languishment.  
 —Aided by this appearance, I at length  
 Prevailed ; and, from those bonds released, she went  
 Home to her mother's house.

The Youth was fled ;

The rash betrayer could not face the shame  
 Or sorrow which his senseless guilt had caused ;  
 And little would his presence, or proof given  
 Of a relenting soul, have now availed ;  
 For, like a shadow, he was passed away  
 From Ellen's thoughts ; had perished to her mind  
 For all concerns of fear, or hope, or love,  
 Save only those which to their common shame,  
 And to his moral being appertained :  
 Hope from that quarter would, I know, have brought  
 A heavenly comfort ; there she recognised  
 An unrelaxing bond, a mutual need ;  
 There, and, as seemed, there only.

She had built,

Her fond maternal heart had built, a nest  
 In blindness all too near the river's edge ;  
 That work a summer flood with hasty swell  
 Had swept away ; and now her Spirit longed  
 For its last flight to heaven's security.  
 —The bodily frame wasted from day to day ;  
 Meanwhile, relinquishing all other cares,  
 Her mind she strictly tutored to find peace  
 And pleasure in endurance. Much she thought,  
 And much she read ; and brooded feelingly  
 Upon her own unworthiness. To me,

As to a spiritual comforter and friend,  
Her heart she opened ; and no pains were spared  
To mitigate, as gently as I could,  
The sting of self-reproach, with healing words.  
Meek Saint ! through patience glorified on earth !  
In whom, as by her lonely hearth she sate,  
The ghastly face of cold decay put on  
A sun-like beauty, and appeared divine !  
May I not mention—that, within those walls,  
In due observance of her pious wish,  
The congregation joined with me in prayer  
For her soul's good ? Nor was that office vain.  
—Much did she suffer : but, if any friend,  
Beholding her condition, at the sight  
Gave way to words of pity or complaint,  
She stilled them with a prompt reproof, and said,  
' He who afflicts me knows what I can bear ;  
' And, when I fail, and can endure no more,  
' Will mercifully take me to himself.'  
So, through the cloud of death, her Spirit passed  
Into that pure and unknown world of love  
Where injury cannot come :—and here is laid  
The mortal Body by her Infant's side."

The Vicar ceased ; and downcast looks made known  
That each had listened with his inmost heart.  
For me, the emotion scarcely was less strong  
Or less benign than that which I had felt  
When, seated near my venerable Friend,  
Under those shady elms, from him I heard  
The story that retraced the slow decline  
Of Margaret, sinking on the lonely heath  
With the neglected house to which she clung.  
—I noted that the Solitary's cheek  
Confessed the power of nature.—Pleased though sad,  
More pleased than sad, the grey-haired Wanderer sate ;  
Thanks to his pure imaginative soul  
Capacious and serene ; his blameless life,  
His knowledge, wisdom, love of truth, and love  
Of human kind ! He was it who first broke  
The pensive silence, saying :—

" Blest are they  
Whose sorrow rather is to suffer wrong  
Than to do wrong, albeit themselves have erred.  
This tale gives proof that Heaven most gently deals

With such, in their affliction.—Ellen's fate,  
 Her tender spirit, and her contrite heart,  
 Call to my mind dark hints which I have heard  
 Of one who died within this vale, by doom  
 Heavier, as his offence was heavier far.  
 Where, Sir, I pray you, where are laid the bones  
 Of Wilfrid Armathwaite ? ”

The Vicar answered,  
 “ In that green nook, close by the Churchyard wall,  
 Beneath yon hawthorn, planted by myself  
 In memory and for warning, and in sign  
 Of sweetness where dire anguish had been known,  
 Of reconciliation after deep offence—  
 There doth he rest. No theme his fate supplies  
 For the smooth glossings of the indulgent world ;  
 Nor need the windings of his devious course  
 Be here retraced ;—enough that, by mishap  
 And venial error, robbed of competence,  
 And her obsequious shadow, peace of mind,  
 He craved a substitute in troubled joy ;  
 Against his conscience rose in arms, and, braving  
 Divine displeasure, broke the marriage-vow.  
 That which he had been weak enough to do  
 Was misery in remembrance ; he was stung,  
 Stung by his inward thoughts, and by the smiles  
 Of wife and children stung to agony.  
 Wretched at home, he gained no peace abroad ;  
 Ranged through the mountains, slept upon the earth,  
 Asked comfort of the open air, and found  
 No quiet in the darkness of the night,  
 No pleasure in the beauty of the day.  
 His flock he slighted : his paternal fields  
 Became a clog to him, whose spirit wished  
 To fly—but whither ! And this gracious Church,  
 That wears a look so full of peace and hope  
 And love, benignant mother of the vale,  
 How fair amid her brood of cottages !  
 She was to him a sickness and reproach.  
 Much to the last remained unknown : but this  
 Is sure, that through remorse and grief he died ;  
 Though pitied among men, absolved by God,  
 He could not find forgiveness in himself ;  
 Nor could endure the weight of his own shame.

Here rests a Mother. But from her I turn

And from her grave.—Behold—upon that ridge,  
That, stretching boldly from the mountain side,  
Carries into the centre of the vale  
Its rocks and woods—the Cottage where she dwelt  
And where yet dwells her faithful Partner, left  
(Full eight years past) the solitary prop  
Of many helpless Children. I begin  
With words that might be prelude to a tale  
Of sorrow and dejection ; but I feel  
No sadness, when I think of what mine eyes  
See daily in that happy family.  
—Bright garland form they for the pensive brow  
Of their undrooping Father's widowhood,  
Those six fair Daughters, budding yet—not one,  
Not one of all the band, a full-blown flower.  
Deprest, and desolate of soul, as once  
That Father was, and filled with anxious fear,  
Now, by experience taught, he stands assured,  
That God, who takes away, yet takes not half  
Of what he seems to take ; or gives it back,  
Not to our prayer, but far beyond our prayer ;  
He gives it—the boon produce of a soil  
Which our endeavours have refused to till,  
And hope hath never watered. The Abode,  
Whose grateful owner can attest these truths,  
Even were the object nearer to our sight,  
Would seem in no distinction to surpass  
The rudest habitations. Ye might think  
That it had sprung self-raised from earth, or grown  
Out of the living rock, to be adorned  
By nature only ; but, if thither led,  
Ye would discover, then, a studious work  
Of many fancies, prompting many hands.

Brought from the woods the honeysuckle twines  
Around the porch, and seems, in that trim place,  
A plant no longer wild ; the cultured rose  
There blossoms, strong in health, and will be soon  
Roof-high ; the wild pink crowns the garden-wall,  
And with the flowers are intermingled stones  
Sparry and bright, rough scatterings of the hills.  
These ornaments, that fade not with the year,  
A hardy Girl continues to provide ;  
Who, mounting fearlessly the rocky heights,  
Her Father's prompt attendant, does for him

All that a boy could do, but with delight  
 More keen and prouder daring ; yet hath she,  
 Within the garden, like the rest, a bed  
 For her own flowers and favourite herbs, a space,  
 By sacred charter, holden for her use.  
 —These, and whatever else the garden bears  
 Of fruit or flower, permission asked or not,  
 I freely gather ; and my leisure draws  
 A not unfrequent pastime from the hum  
 Of bees around their range of sheltered hives  
 Busy in that enclosure ; while the rill,  
 That sparkling thrills the rocks, attunes his voice  
 To the pure course of human life which there  
 Flows on in solitude. But, when the gloom  
 Of night is falling round my steps, then most  
 This Dwelling charms me ; often I stop short,  
 (Who could refrain ?) and feed by stealth my sight  
 With prospect of the company within,  
 Laid open through the blazing window :—there  
 I see the eldest Daughter at her wheel  
 Spinning amain, as if to overtake  
 The never-halting time ; or, in her turn,  
 Teaching some Novice of the sisterhood  
 That skill in this or other household work,  
 Which, from her Father's honoured hand, herself,  
 While she was yet a little-one, had learned.  
 Mild Man ! he is not gay, but they are gay ;  
 And the whole house seems filled with gaiety.  
 —Thrice happy, then, the Mother may be deemed,  
 The Wife, from whose consolatory grave  
 I turned, that ye in mind might witness where,  
 And how, her Spirit yet survives on earth !”

## BOOK SEVENTH

## THE CHURCHYARD AMONG THE MOUNTAINS—(continued)

## ARGUMENT

Impression of these Narratives upon the Author's mind—Pastor invited to give account of certain Graves that lie apart—Clergyman and his Family—Fortunate influence of change of situation—Activity in extreme old age—Another Clergyman, a character of resolute Virtue—Lamentations over misdirected applause—Instance of less exalted excellence in a deaf man—Elevated character of a blind man—Reflection upon Blindness—Interrupted by a Peasant who passes—His animal cheerfulness and careless vivacity—He occasions a digression on the fall of beautiful and interesting Trees—A female Infant's Grave

—Joy at her Birth—Sorrow at her Departure—A youthful Peasant—  
His patriotic enthusiasm and distinguished qualities—His untimely  
death—Exultation of the Wanderer, as a patriot, in this Picture—  
Solitary how affected—Monument of a Knight—Traditions concerning  
him—Peroration of the Wanderer on the transitoriness of things and  
the revolutions of society—Hints at his own past Calling—Thanks the  
Pastor.

WHILE thus from theme to theme the Historian passed,  
The words he uttered, and the scene that lay  
Before our eyes, awakened in my mind  
Vivid remembrance of those long-past hours ;  
When, in the hollow of some shadowy vale,  
(What time the splendour of the setting sun  
Lay beautiful on Snowdon's sovereign brow,  
On Cader Idris, or huge Penmanmaur)  
A wandering Youth, I listened with delight  
To pastoral melody or warlike air,  
Drawn from the chords of the ancient British harp  
By some accomplished Master, while he sate  
Amid the quiet of the green recess,  
And there did inexhaustibly dispense  
An interchange of soft or solemn tunes,  
Tender or blithe ; now, as the varying mood  
Of his own spirit urged,—now, as a voice  
From youth or maiden, or some honoured chief  
Of his compatriot villagers (that hung  
Around him, drinking in the impassioned notes  
Of the time-hallowed minstrelsy) required  
For their heart's ease or pleasure. Strains of power  
Were they, to seize and occupy the sense ;  
But to a higher mark than song can reach  
Rose this pure eloquence. And, when the stream  
Which overflowed the soul was passed away,  
A consciousness remained that it had left,  
Deposited upon the silent shore  
Of memory, images and precious thoughts,  
That shall not die, and cannot be destroyed.

"These grassy heaps lie amicably close,"  
Said I, "like surges heaving in the wind  
Along the surface of a mountain pool :  
Whence comes it, then, that yonder we behold  
Five graves, and only five, that rise together  
Unsociably sequestered, and encroaching  
On the smooth playground of the village-school ?"

The Vicar answered,—“No disdainful pride  
 In them who rest beneath, nor any course  
 Of strange or tragic accident, hath helped  
 To place those hillocks in that lonely guise.  
 —Once more look forth, and follow with your sight  
 The length of road that from yon mountain's base  
 Through bare enclosures stretches, 'till its line  
 Is lost within a little tuft of trees ;  
 Then, reappearing in a moment, quits  
 The cultured fields ; and up the heathy waste,  
 Mounts, as you see, in mazes serpentine,  
 Led towards an easy outlet of the vale.  
 That little shady spot, that sylvan tuft,  
 By which the road is hidden, also hides  
 A cottage from our view ; though I discern  
 (Ye scarcely can) amid its sheltering trees  
 The smokeless chimney-top.—

All unembowered

And naked stood that lowly Parsonage  
 (For such in truth it is, and appertains  
 To a small Chapel in the vale beyond)  
 When hither came its last Inhabitant.  
 Rough and forbidding were the choicest roads  
 By which our northern wilds could then be crossed ;  
 And into most of these secluded vales  
 Was no access for wain, heavy or light.  
 So, at his dwelling-place the Priest arrived  
 With store of household goods, in panniers slung  
 On sturdy horses graced with jingling bells,  
 And on the back of more ignoble beast ;  
 That, with like burthen of effects most prized  
 Or easiest carried, closed the motley train.  
 Young was I then, a schoolboy of eight years ;  
 But still, methinks, I see them as they passed  
 In order, drawing toward their wished-for home.  
 —Rocked by the motion of a trusty ass  
 Two ruddy children hung, a well-poised freight,  
 Each in his basket nodding drowsily ;  
 Their bonnets, I remember, wreathed with flowers,  
 Which told it was the pleasant month of June ;  
 And, close behind, the comely Matron rode,  
 A woman of soft speech and gracious smile,  
 And with a lady's mien.—From far they came,  
 Even from Northumbrian hills ; yet theirs had been  
 A merry journey, rich in pastime, cheered

By music, prank, and laughter-stirring jest ;  
And freak put on, and arch word dropped—to swell  
The cloud of fancy and uncouth surmise  
That gathered round the slowly-moving train.  
—‘Whence do they come? and with what errand charged?  
‘Belong they to the fortune-telling tribe  
‘Who pitch their tents under the greenwood tree?  
‘Or Strollers are they, furnished to enact  
‘Fair Rosamond, and the Children of the Wood,  
‘And, by that whiskered tabby’s aid, set forth  
‘The lucky venture of sage Whittington,  
‘When the next village hears the show announced  
‘By blast of trumpet?’ Plenteous was the growth  
Of such conjectures, overheard, or seen  
On many a staring countenance portrayed  
Of boor or burgher, as they marched along.  
And more than once their steadiness of face  
Was put to proof, and exercise supplied  
To their inventive humour, by stern looks,  
And questions in authoritative tone,  
From some staid guardian of the public peace,  
Checking the sober steed on which he rode,  
In his suspicious wisdom; oftener still,  
By notice indirect, or blunt demand  
From traveller halting in his own despite,  
A simple curiosity to ease:  
Of which adventures, that beguiled and cheered  
Their grave migration, the good pair would tell,  
With undiminished glee, in hoary age.

A Priest he was by function; but his course  
From his youth up, and high as manhood’s noon,  
(The hour of life to which he then was brought)  
Had been irregular, I might say, wild;  
By books unsteadied, by his pastoral care  
Too little checked. An active, ardent mind;  
A fancy pregnant with resource and scheme  
To cheat the sadness of a rainy day;  
Hands apt for all ingenious arts and games;  
A generous spirit, and a body strong  
To cope with stoutest champions of the bowl—  
Had earned for him sure welcome, and the rights  
Of a prized visitant, in the jolly hall  
Of country squire; or at the statelier board  
Of duke or earl, from scenes of courtly pomp

Withdrawn,—to while away the summer hours  
In condescension among rural guests.

With these high comrades he had revelled long,  
Frolicked industriously, a simple Clerk  
By hopes of coming patronage beguiled  
Till the heart sickened. So, each loftier aim  
Abandoning and all his showy friends,  
For a life's stay (slender it was, but sure)  
He turned to this secluded chapelry ;  
That had been offered to his doubtful choice  
By an unthought-of patron. Bleak and bare  
They found the cottage, their allotted home ;  
Naked without, and rude within ; a spot  
With which the Cure not long had been endowed :  
And far remote the chapel stood,—remote,  
And, from his Dwelling, unapproachable,  
Save through a gap high in the hills, an opening  
Shadeless and shelterless, by driving showers  
Frequented, and beset with howling winds.  
Yet cause was none, whate'er regret might hang  
On his own mind, to quarrel with the choice  
Or the necessity that fixed him here ;  
Apart from old temptations, and constrained  
To punctual labour in his sacred charge.  
See him a constant preacher to the poor !  
And visiting, though not with saintly zeal,  
Yet, when need was, with no reluctant will,  
The sick in body, or distress in mind ;  
And, by a salutary change, compelled  
To rise from timely sleep, and meet the day  
With no engagement, in his thoughts, more proud  
Or splendid than his garden could afford,  
His fields, or mountains by the heath-cock ranged  
Or the wild brooks ; from which he now returned  
Contented to partake the quiet meal  
Of his own board, where sate his gentle Mate  
And three fair Children, plentifully fed  
Though simply, from their little household farm ;  
Nor wanted timely treat of fish or fowl  
By nature yielded to his practised hand ;—  
To help the small but certain comings-in  
Of that spare benefice. Yet not the less  
Theirs was a hospitable board, and theirs  
A charitable door.

So days and years

Passed on ;—the inside of that rugged house  
Was trimmed and brightened by the Matron's care,  
And gradually enriched with things of price,  
Which might be lacked for use or ornament.  
What, though no soft and costly sofa there  
Insidiously stretched out its lazy length,  
And no vain mirror glittered upon the walls,  
Yet were the windows of the low abode  
By shutters weather-fenced, which at once  
Repelled the storm and deadened its loud roar.  
There snow-white curtains hung in decent folds ;  
Tough moss, and long-enduring mountain plants,  
That creep along the ground with sinuous trail,  
Were nicely braided ; and composed a work  
Like Indian mats, that with appropriate grace  
Lay at the threshold and the inner doors ;  
And a fair carpet, woven of homespun wool  
But tintured daintily with florid hues,  
For seemliness and warmth, on festal days,  
Covered the smooth blue slabs of mountain-stone  
With which the parlour-floor, in simplest guise  
Of pastoral homesteads, had been long inlaid.

Those pleasing works the Housewife's skill produced :  
Meanwhile the unsedentary Master's hand  
Was busier with his task—to rid, to plant,  
To rear for food, for shelter, and delight ;  
A thriving covert ! And when wishes, formed  
In youth, and sanctioned by the riper mind,  
Restored me to my native valley, here  
To end my days ; well pleased was I to see  
The once-bare cottage, on the mountain-side,  
Screened from assault of every bitter blast ;  
While the dark shadows of the summer leaves  
Danced in the breeze, chequering its mossy roof.  
Time, which had thus afforded willing help  
To beautify with nature's fairest growths  
This rustic tenement, had gently shed,  
Upon its Master's frame, a wintry grace ;  
The comeliness of unenfeebled age.

But how could I say, gently ? for he still  
Retained a flashing eye, a burning palm,  
A stirring foot, a head which beat at nights  
Upon its pillow with a thousand schemes.

Few likings had he dropped, few pleasures lost ;  
Generous and charitable, prompt to serve ;  
And still his harsher passions kept their hold—  
Anger and indignation. Still he loved  
The sound of titled names, and talked in glee  
Of long-past banquetings with high-born friends :  
Then, from those lulling fits of vain delight  
Uproused by recollected injury, railed  
At their false ways disdainfully,—and oft  
In bitterness, and with a threatening eye  
Of fire, incensed beneath its hoary brow.  
—Those transports, with staid looks of pure good-will,  
And with soft smile, his consort would reprove.  
She, far behind him in the race of years,  
Yet keeping her first mildness, was advanced  
Far nearer, in the habit of her soul,  
To that still region whither all are bound ;  
Him might we liken to the setting sun  
As seen not seldom on some gusty day,  
Struggling and bold, and shining from the west  
With an inconstant and unmellowed light ;  
She was a soft attendant cloud, that hung  
As if with wish to veil the restless orb ;  
From which it did itself imbibe a ray  
Of pleasing lustre.—But no more of this ;  
I better love to sprinkle on the sod  
That now divides the pair, or rather say,  
That still unites them, praises, like heaven's dew,  
Without reserve descending upon both.

Our very first in eminence of years  
This old Man stood, the patriarch of the Vale !  
And, to his unmolested mansion, death  
Had never come, through space of forty years ;  
Sparing both old and young in that abode.  
Suddenly then they disappeared : not twice  
Had summer scorched the fields ; not twice had fallen,  
On those high peaks, the first autumnal snow,  
Before the greedy visiting was closed,  
And the long-privileged house left empty—swept  
As by a plague. Yet no rapacious plague  
Had been among them ; all was gentle death,  
One after one, with intervals of peace.  
A happy consummation ! an accord  
Sweet, perfect, to be wished for ! save that here

Was something which to mortal sense might sound  
 Like harshness,—that the old grey-headed Sire,  
 The oldest, he was taken last ; survived  
 When the meek Partner of his age, his Son,  
 His Daughter, and that late and high-prized gift,  
 His little smiling Grandchild, were no more.

‘ All gone, all vanished ! he deprived and bare,  
 ‘ How will he face the remnant of his life ?  
 ‘ What will become of him ? ’ we said, and mused  
 In sad conjectures—‘ Shall we meet him now  
 ‘ Haunting with rod and line the craggy brooks ?  
 ‘ Or shall we overhear him, as we pass,  
 ‘ Striving to entertain the lonely hours  
 ‘ With music ? ’ (for he had not ceased to touch  
 The harp or viol which himself had framed,  
 For their sweet purposes, with perfect skill.)  
 ‘ What titles will he keep ? will he remain  
 ‘ Musician, gardener, builder, mechanist,  
 ‘ A planter, and a rearer from the seed ?  
 ‘ A man of hope and forward-looking mind  
 ‘ Even to the last ! ’—Such was he, unsubdued.  
 But Heaven was gracious ; yet a little while,  
 And this Survivor, with his cheerful throng  
 Of open projects, and his inward hoard  
 Of unsunned griefs, too many and too keen,  
 Was overcome by unexpected sleep,  
 In one blest moment. Like a shadow thrown  
 Softly and lightly from a passing cloud,  
 Death fell upon him, while reclined he lay  
 For noontide solace on the summer grass,  
 The warm lap of his mother earth : and so,  
 Their lenient term of separation past,  
 That family (whose graves you there behold)  
 By yet a higher privilege once more  
 Were gathered to each other.”

Calm of mind  
 And silence waited on these closing words ;  
 Until the Wanderer (whether moved by fear  
 Lest in those passages of life were some  
 That might have touched the sick heart of his Friend  
 Too nearly, or intent to reinforce  
 His own firm spirit in degree deprest  
 By tender sorrow for our mortal state)  
 Thus silence broke :—“ Behold a thoughtless Man

From vice and premature decay preserved  
 By useful habits, to a fitter soil  
 Transplanted ere too late.—The hermit, lodged  
 Amid the untrodden desert, tells his beads,  
 With each repeating its allotted prayer,  
 And thus divides and thus relieves the time ;  
 Smooth task, with *his* compared, whose mind could string,  
 Not scantily, bright minutes on the thread  
 Of keen domestic anguish ; and beguile  
 A solitude, unchosen, unprofessed ;  
 Till gentlest death released him.

Far from us

Be the desire—too curiously to ask  
 How much of this is but the blind result  
 Of cordial spirits and vital temperament,  
 And what to higher powers is justly due.  
 But you, Sir, know that in a neighbouring vale  
 A Priest abides before whose life such doubts  
 Fall to the ground ; whose gifts of nature lie  
 Retired from notice, lost in attributes  
 Of reason, honourably effaced by debts  
 Which her poor treasure-house is content to owe,  
 And conquest over her dominion gained,  
 To which her frowardness must needs submit.  
 In this one Man is shown a temperance—proof  
 Against all trials ; industry severe  
 And constant as the motion of the day ;  
 Stern self-denial round him spread, with shade  
 That might be deemed forbidding, did not there  
 All generous feelings flourish and rejoice ;  
 Forbearance, charity in deed and thought,  
 And resolution competent to take  
 Out of the bosom of simplicity  
 All that her holy customs recommend,  
 And the best ages of the world prescribe.  
 —Preaching, administering, in every work  
 Of his sublime vocation, in the walks  
 Of worldly intercourse between man and man,  
 And in his humble dwelling, he appears  
 A labourer, with moral virtue girt,  
 With spiritual graces, like a glory, crowned.”

“Doubt can be none,” the Pastor said, “for whom  
 This portraiture is sketched. The great, the good,  
 The well-beloved, the fortunate, the wise,—

These titles emperors and chiefs have borne,  
Honour assumed or given : and him, the WONDERFUL,  
Our simple shepherds, speaking from the heart,  
Deservedly have styled.—From his abode  
In a dependent chapelry that lies  
Behind yon hill, a poor and rugged wild,  
Which in his soul he lovingly embraced,  
And, having once espoused, would never quit ;  
Into its graveyard will ere long be borne  
That lowly, great, good Man. A simple stone  
May cover him ; and by its help, perchance,  
A century shall hear his name pronounced,  
With images attendant on the sound ;  
Then, shall the slowly-gathering twilight close  
In utter night ; and of his course remain  
No cognizable vestiges, no more  
Than of this breath, which shapes itself in words  
To speak of him, and instantly dissolves."

The Pastor, pressed by thoughts which round his theme  
Still lingered, after a brief pause, resumed ;  
"Noise is there not enough in doleful war,  
But that the heaven-born poet must stand forth,  
And lend the echoes of his sacred shell,  
To multiply and aggravate the din ?  
Pangs are there not enough in hopeless love—  
And, in requited passion, all too much  
Of turbulence, anxiety, and fear—  
But that the minstrel of the rural shade  
Must tune his pipe, insidiously to nurse  
The perturbation in the suffering breast,  
And propagate its kind, far as he may ?  
—Ah who (and with such rapture as befits  
The hallowed theme) will rise and celebrate  
The good man's purposes and deeds ; retrace  
His struggles, his discomfitures deplore,  
His triumphs hail, and glorify his end ;  
That virtue, like the fumes and vapoury clouds  
Through fancy's heat redounding in the brain,  
And like the soft infections of the heart,  
By charm of measured words may spread o'er field,  
Hamlet, and town ; and piety survive  
Upon the lips of men in hall or bower ;  
Not for reproof, but high and warm delight,  
And grave encouragement, by song inspired ?

—Vain thought ! but wherefore murmur or repine ?  
 The memory of the just survives in heaven :  
 And, without sorrow, will the ground receive  
 That venerable clay. Meanwhile the best  
 Of what lies here confines us to degrees  
 In excellence less difficult to reach,  
 And milder worth : nor need we travel far  
 From those to whom our last regards were paid,  
 For such example.

Almost at the root  
 Of that tall pine, the shadow of whose bare  
 And slender stem, while here I sit at eve,  
 Oft stretches towards me, like a long straight path  
 Traced faintly in the greensward ; there, beneath  
 A plain blue stone, a gentle Dalesman lies,  
 From whom, in early childhood, was withdrawn  
 The precious gift of hearing. He grew up  
 From year to year in loneliness of soul ;  
 And this deep mountain-valley was to him  
 Soundless, with all its streams. The bird of dawn  
 Did never rouse this Cottager from sleep  
 With startling summons ; not for his delight  
 The vernal cuckoo shouted ; not for him  
 Murmured the labouring bee. When stormy winds  
 Were working the broad bosom of the lake  
 Into a thousand thousand sparkling waves,  
 Rocking the trees, or driving cloud on cloud  
 Along the sharp edge of yon lofty crags,  
 The agitated scene before his eye  
 Was silent as a picture : evermore  
 Were all things silent, wheresoe'er he moved.  
 Yet, by the solace of his own pure thoughts  
 Upheld, he duteously pursued the round  
 Of rural labours ; the steep mountain-side  
 Ascended, with his staff and faithful dog ;  
 The plough he guided, and the scythe he swayed ;  
 And the ripe corn before his sickle fell  
 Among the jocund reapers. For himself,  
 All watchful and industrious as he was,  
 He wrought not : neither field nor flock he owned :  
 No wish for wealth had place within his mind ;  
 Nor husband's love, nor father's hope or care.

Though born a younger brother, need was none  
 That from the floor of his paternal home

He should depart, to plant himself anew.  
And when, mature in manhood, he beheld  
His parents laid in earth, no loss ensued  
Of rights to him ; but he remained well pleased,  
By the pure bond of independent love,  
An inmate of a second family ;  
The fellow-labourer and friend of him  
To whom the small inheritance had fallen.  
—Nor deem that his mild presence was a weight  
That pressed upon his brother's house ; for books  
Were ready comrades whom he could not tire ;  
Of whose society the blameless Man  
Was never satiate. Their familiar voice,  
Even to old age, with unabated charm  
Beguiled his leisure hours ; refreshed his thoughts ;  
Beyond its natural elevation raised  
His introverted spirit ; and bestowed  
Upon his life an outward dignity  
Which all acknowledged. The dark winter night,  
The stormy day, each had its own resource ;  
Song of the muses, sage historic tale,  
Science severe, or word of holy Writ  
Announcing immortality and joy  
To the assembled spirits of just men  
Made perfect, and from injury secure.  
—Thus soothed at home, thus busy in the field,  
To no perverse suspicion he gave way,  
No languor, peevishness, nor vain complaint :  
And they, who were about him, did not fail  
In reverence, or in courtesy ; they prized  
His gentle manners ; and his peaceful smiles,  
The gleams of his slow-varying countenance,  
Were met with answering sympathy and love.

At length, when sixty years and five were told  
A slow disease insensibly consumed  
The powers of nature : and a few short steps  
Of friends and kindred bore him from his home  
(Yon cottage shaded by the woody crags)  
To the profounder stillness of the grave.  
—Nor was his funeral denied the grace  
Of many tears, virtuous and thoughtful grief ;  
Heart-sorrow rendered sweet by gratitude.  
And now that monumental stone preserves  
His name, and unambitiously relates

How long, and by what kindly outward aids,  
 And in what pure contentedness of mind,  
 The sad privation was by him endured.  
 —And yon tall pine-tree, whose composing sound  
 Was wasted on the good Man's living ear,  
 Hath now its own peculiar sanctity ;  
 And, at the touch of every wandering breeze,  
 Murmurs, not idly, o'er his peaceful grave.

Soul-cheering Light, most bountiful of things !  
 Guide of our way, mysterious comforter !  
 Whose sacred influence, spread through earth and heaven,  
 We all too thanklessly participate,  
 Thy gifts were utterly withheld from him  
 Whose place of rest is near yon ivied porch.  
 Yet, of the wild brooks ask if he complained ;  
 Ask of the channelled rivers if they held  
 A safer, easier, more determined, course.  
 What terror doth it strike into the mind  
 To think of one, blind and alone, advancing  
 Straight toward some precipice's airy brink !  
 But, timely warned, *He* would have stayed his steps,  
 Protected, say enlightened, by his ear ;  
 And on the very edge of vacancy  
 Not more endangered than a man whose eye  
 Beholds the gulf beneath.—No floweret blooms  
 Throughout the lofty range of these rough hills,  
 Nor in the woods, that could from him conceal  
 Its birth-place ; none whose figure did not live  
 Upon his touch. The bowels of the earth  
 Enriched with knowledge his industrious mind ;  
 The ocean paid him tribute from the stores  
 Lodged in her bosom ; and, by science led,  
 His genius mounted to the plains of heaven.  
 —Methinks I see him—how his eye-balls rolled,  
 Beneath his ample brow, in darkness paired,—  
 But each instinct with spirit ; and the frame  
 Of the whole countenance alive with thought,  
 Fancy, and understanding ; while the voice  
 Discoursed of natural or moral truth  
 With eloquence, and such authentic power,  
 That, in his presence, humbler knowledge stood  
 Abashed, and tender pity overawed."

"A noble—and, to unreflecting minds,  
 A marvellous spectacle," the Wanderer said,

"Beings like these present! But proof abounds  
Upon the earth that faculties, which seem  
Extinguished, do not, *therefore*, cease to be.  
And to the mind among her powers of sense  
This transfer is permitted,—not alone  
That the bereft their recompense may win;  
But for remoter purposes of love  
And charity; nor last nor least for this,  
That to the imagination may be given  
A type and shadow of an awful truth;  
How, likewise, under sufferance divine,  
Darkness is banished from the realms of death,  
By man's imperishable spirit, quelled.  
Unto the men who see not as we see  
Futurity was thought, in ancient times,  
To be laid open, and they prophesied.  
And know we not that from the blind have flowed  
The highest, holiest, raptures of the lyre;  
And wisdom married to immortal verse?"

Among the humbler Worthies, at our feet  
Lying insensible to human praise,  
Love, or regret,—*whose* lineaments would next  
Have been portrayed, I guess not; but it chanced  
That, near the quiet churchyard where we sate,  
A team of horses, with a ponderous freight  
Pressing behind, adown a rugged slope,  
Whose sharp descent confounded their array,  
Came at that moment, ringing noisily.

"Here," said the Pastor, "do we muse, and mourn  
The waste of death; and lo! the giant oak  
Stretched on his bier—that massy timber wain;  
Nor fail to note the Man who guides the team."

He was a peasant of the lowest class:  
Grey locks profusely round his temples hung  
In clustering curls, like ivy, which the bite  
Of winter cannot thin; the fresh air lodged  
Within his cheek, as light within a cloud;  
And he returned our greeting with a smile.  
When he had passed, the Solitary spake;  
"A Man he seems of cheerful yesterdays  
And confident to-morrows; with a face  
Not worldly-minded, for it bears too much  
Of Nature's impress,—gaiety and health,

Freedom and hope ; but keen, withal, and shrewd.  
His gestures note,—and hark ! his tones of voice  
Are all vivacious as his mien and looks."

The Pastor answered : " You have read him well.  
Year after year is added to his store  
With *silent* increase : summers, winters—past,  
Past or to come ; yea, boldly might I say,  
Ten summers and ten winters of a space  
That lies beyond life's ordinary bounds,  
Upon his sprightly vigour cannot fix  
The obligation of an anxious mind,  
A pride in having, or a fear to lose ;  
Possessed like outskirts of some large domain,  
By any one more thought of than by him  
Who holds the land in fee, its careless lord !  
Yet is the creature rational, endowed  
With foresight ; hears, too, every sabbath day,  
The christian promise with attentive ear ;  
Nor will, I trust, the Majesty of Heaven  
Reject the incense offered up by him,  
Though of the kind which beasts and birds present  
In grove or pasture ; cheerfulness of soul,  
From trepidation and repining free.  
How many scrupulous worshippers fall down  
Upon their knees, and daily homage pay  
Less worthy, less religious even, than his !

This qualified respect, the old Man's due,  
Is paid without reluctance ; but in truth,"  
(Said the good Vicar with a fond half-smile)  
" I feel at times a motion of despite  
Towards one, whose bold contrivances and skill,  
As you have seen, bear such conspicuous part  
In works of havoc ; taking from these vales,  
One after one, their proudest ornaments.  
Full oft his doings leave me to deplore  
Tall ash-tree, sown by winds, by vapours nursed,  
In the dry crannies of the pendent rocks ;  
Light birch, aloft upon the horizon's edge,  
A veil of glory for the ascending moon ;  
And oak whose roots by noontide dew were damped,  
And on whose forehead inaccessible  
The raven lodged in safety.—Many a ship  
Launched into Morecamb-bay to *him* hath owed

Her strong knee-timbers, and the mast that bears  
The loftiest of her pendants ; He, from park  
Or forest, fetched the enormous axle-tree  
That whirls (how slow itself !) ten thousand spindles :  
And the vast engine labouring in the mine,  
Content with meaner prowess, must have lacked  
The trunk and body of its marvellous strength,  
If his undaunted enterprise had failed  
Among the mountain coves.

Yon household fir,

A guardian planted to fence off the blast,  
But towering high the roof above, as if  
Its humble destination were forgot—  
That sycamore, which annually holds  
Within its shade, as in a stately tent  
On all sides open to the fanning breeze,  
A grave assemblage, seated while they shear  
The fleece-encumbered flock—the JOYFUL ELM,  
Around whose trunk the maidens dance in May—  
And the LORD'S OAK—would plead their several rights  
In vain, if he were master of their fate ;  
His sentence to the axe would doom them all.  
But, green in age and lusty as he is,  
And promising to keep his hold on earth  
Less, as might seem, in rivalry with men  
Than with the forest's more enduring growth,  
His own appointed hour will come at last ;  
And, like the haughty Spoilers of the world,  
This keen Destroyer, in his turn, must fall.

Now from the living pass we once again :  
From Age," the Priest continued, "turn your thoughts ;  
From Age, that often unlamented drops,  
And mark that daisied hillock, three spans long !  
—Seven lusty Sons sate daily round the board  
Of Gold-rill side ; and, when the hope had ceased  
Of other progeny, a Daughter then  
Was given, the crowning bounty of the whole ;  
And so acknowledged with a tremulous joy  
Felt to the centre of that heavenly calm  
With which by nature every mother's soul  
Is stricken in the moment when her throes  
Are ended, and her ears have heard the cry  
Which tells her that a living child is born ;

And she lies conscious, in a blissful rest,  
That the dread storm is weathered by them both.

The Father—him at this unlooked-for gift  
A bolder transport seizes. From the side  
Of his bright hearth, and from his open door,  
Day after day the gladness is diffused  
To all that come, almost to all that pass ;  
Invited, summoned, to partake the cheer  
Spread on the never-empty board, and drink  
Health and good wishes to his new-born girl,  
From cups replenished by his joyous hand.  
—Those seven fair brothers variously were moved  
Each by the thoughts best suited to his years :  
But most of all and with most thankful mind  
The hoary grandsire felt himself enriched ;  
A happiness that ebb'd not, but remained  
To fill the total measure of his soul !  
—From the low tenement, his own abode,  
Whither, as to a little private cell,  
He had withdrawn from bustle, care, and noise,  
To spend the sabbath of old age in peace,  
Once every day he duteously repaired  
To rock the cradle of the slumbering babe :  
For in that female infant's name he heard  
The silent name of his departed wife ;  
Heart-stirring music ! hourly heard that name ;  
Full blest he was, ' Another Margaret Green,'  
Oft did he say, ' was come to Gold-rill side.'

Oh ! pang unthought of, as the precious boon  
Itself had been unlooked-for ; oh ! dire stroke  
Of desolating anguish for them all !  
—Just as the Child could totter on the floor,  
And, by some friendly finger's help upstayed,  
Range round the garden walk, while she perchance  
Was catching at some novelty of spring,  
Ground-flower, or glossy insect from its cell  
Drawn by the sunshine—at that hopeful season  
The winds of March, smiting insidiously,  
Raised in the tender passage of the throat  
Viewless obstruction ; whence, all unforewarned,  
The household lost their pride and soul's delight.  
—But time hath power to soften all regrets,  
And prayer and thought can bring to worst distress  
Due resignation. Therefore, though some tears

Fail not to spring from either Parent's eye  
Oft as they hear of sorrow like their own,  
Yet this departed Little-one, too long  
The innocent troubler of their quiet, sleeps  
In what may now be called a peaceful bed.

On a bright day—so calm and bright, it seemed  
To us, with our sad spirits, heavenly-fair—  
These mountains echoed to an unknown sound ;  
A volley, thrice repeated o'er the Corse  
Let down into the hollow of that grave,  
Whose shelving sides are red with naked mould.  
Ye rains of April, duly wet this earth !  
Spare, burning sun of midsummer, these sods,  
That they may knit together, and therewith  
Our thoughts unite in kindred quietness !  
Nor so the Valley shall forget her loss.  
Dear Youth, by young and old alike beloved,  
To me as precious as my own !—Green herbs  
May creep (I wish that they would softly creep)  
Over thy last abode, and we may pass  
Reminded less imperiously of thee ;—  
The ridge itself may sink into the breast  
Of earth, the great abyss, and be no more ;  
Yet shall not thy remembrance leave our hearts.  
Thy image disappear !

The Mountain-ash

No eye can overlook, when 'mid a grove  
Of yet unfaded trees she lifts her head  
Decked with autumnal berries, that outshine  
Spring's richest blossoms ; and ye may have marked,  
By a brook-side or solitary tarn,  
How she her station doth adorn : the pool  
Glow's at her feet, and all the gloomy rocks  
Are brightened round her. In his native vale  
Such and so glorious did this Youth appear ;  
A sight that kindled pleasure in all hearts  
By his ingenuous beauty, by the gleam  
Of his fair eyes, by his capacious brow,  
By all the graces with which nature's hand  
Had lavishly arrayed him. As old bards  
Tell in their idle songs of wandering gods,  
Pan or Apollo, veiled in human form :  
Yet, like the sweet-breathed violet of the shade  
Discovered in their own despite to sense

Of mortals (if such fables without blame  
 May find chance-mention on this sacred ground)  
 So, through a simple rustic garb's disguise,  
 And through the impediment of rural cares,  
 In him revealed a scholar's genius shone ;  
 And so, not wholly hidden from men's sight,  
 In him the spirit of a hero walked  
 Our unpretending valley.—How the quoit  
 Whizzed from the Stripling's arm ! If touched by him,  
 The inglorious foot-ball mounted to the pitch  
 Of the lark's flight,—or shaped a rainbow curve,  
 Aloft, in prospect of the shouting field !  
 The indefatigable fox had learned  
 To dread his perseverance in the chase.  
 With admiration would he lift his eyes  
 To the wide-ruling eagle, and his hand  
 Was loth to assault the majesty he loved :  
 Else had the strongest fastnesses proved weak  
 To guard the royal brood. The sailing glead,  
 The wheeling swallow, and the darting snipe ;  
 The sportive sea-gull dancing with the waves,  
 And cautious water-fowl, from distant climes,  
 Fixed at their seat, the centre of the Mere ;  
 Were subject to young Oswald's steady aim,  
 And lived by his forbearance.

From the coast  
 Of France a boastful Tyrant hurled his threats ;  
 Our Country marked the preparation vast  
 Of hostile forces ; and she called—with voice  
 That filled her plains, that reached her utmost shores,  
 And in remotest vales was heard—to arms !  
 —Then, for the first time, here you might have seen  
 The shepherd's grey to martial scarlet changed,  
 That flashed uncouthly through the woods and fields.  
 Ten hardy Striplings, all in bright attire,  
 And graced with shining weapons, weekly marched,  
 From this lone valley, to a central spot  
 Where, in assemblage with the flower and choice  
 Of the surrounding district, they might learn  
 The rudiments of war ; ten—hardy, strong,  
 And valiant ; but young Oswald, like a chief  
 And yet a modest comrade, led them forth  
 From their shy solitude, to face the world,  
 With a gay confidence and seemly pride ;  
 Measuring the soil beneath their happy feet

Like Youths released from labour, and yet bound  
To most laborious service, though to them  
A festival of unencumbered ease;  
The inner spirit keeping holiday,  
Like vernal ground to sabbath sunshine left.

Oft have I marked him, at some leisure hour,  
Stretched on the grass, or seated in the shade,  
Among his fellows, while an ample map  
Before their eyes lay carefully outspread,  
From which the gallant teacher would discourse,  
Now pointing this way, and now that.—‘Here flows,’  
Thus would he say, ‘the Rhine, that famous stream !  
‘Eastward, the Danube toward this inland sea,  
‘A mightier river, winds from realm to realm ;  
‘And, like a serpent, shows his glittering back  
‘Bespotted—with innumerable isles :  
‘Here reigns the Russian, there the Turk ; observe  
‘His capital city !’ Thence, along a tract  
Of livelier interest to his hopes and fears,  
His finger moved, distinguishing the spots  
Where wide-spread conflict then most fiercely raged  
Nor left unstigmatized those fatal fields  
On which the sons of mighty Germany  
Were taught a base submission.—‘Here behold  
‘A nobler race, the Switzers, and their land,  
‘Vales deeper far than these of ours, huge woods,  
‘And mountains white with everlasting snow !’  
—And, surely, he, that spake with kindling brow,  
Was a true patriot, hopeful as the best  
Of that young peasantry, who, in our days,  
Have fought and perished for Helvetia’s rights—  
Ah, not in vain !—or those who, in old time,  
For work of happier issue, to the side  
Of Tell came trooping from a thousand huts,  
When he had risen alone ! No braver Youth  
Descended from Judean heights, to march  
With righteous Joshua ; nor appeared in arms  
When grove was felled, and altar was cast down,  
And Gideon blew the trumpet, soul-inflamed,  
And strong in hatred of idolatry.”

The Pastor, even as if by these last words  
Raised from his seat within the chosen shade,  
Moved toward the grave ;—instinctively his steps  
We followed ; and my voice with joy exclaimed :

"Power to the Oppressors of the world is given,  
 A night of which they dream not. Oh! the curse,  
 To be the awakener of divinest thoughts,  
 Father and founder of exalted deeds;  
 And, to whole nations bound in servile straits,  
 The liberal donor of capacities  
 More than heroic! this to be, nor yet  
 Have sense of one connatural wish, nor yet  
 Deserve the least return of human thanks;  
 Winning no recompense but deadly hate  
 With pity mixed, astonishment with scorn!"

When this involuntary strain had ceased,  
 The Pastor said: "So Providence is served;  
 The forkèd weapon of the skies can send  
 Illumination into deep, dark holds,  
 Which the mild sunbeam hath not power to pierce.  
 Ye Thrones that have defied remorse, and cast  
 Pity away, soon shall ye quake with *fear*!  
 For, not unconscious of the mighty debt  
 Which to outrageous wrong the sufferer owes,  
 Europe, through all her habitable bounds,  
 Is thirsting for *their* overthrow, who yet  
 Survive, as pagan temples stood of yore,  
 By horror of their impious rites, preserved;  
 Are still permitted to extend their pride,  
 Like cedars on the top of Lebanon  
 Darkening the sun.

But less impatient thoughts,  
 And love 'all hoping and expecting all,'  
 This hallowed grave demands, where rests in peace  
 A humble champion of the better cause,  
 A Peasant-youth, so call him, for he asked  
 No higher name; in whom our country showed,  
 As in a favourite son, most beautiful.  
 In spite of vice, and misery, and disease,  
 Spread with the spreading of her wealthy arts,  
 England, the ancient and the free, appeared  
 In him to stand before my swimming eyes,  
 Unconquerably virtuous and secure.  
 —No more of this, lest I offend his dust:  
 Short was his life, and a brief tale remains.

One day—a summer's day of annual pomp  
 And solemn chase—from morn to sultry noon  
 His steps had followed, fleetest of the fleet,

The red-deer driven along its native heights  
With cry of hound and horn ; and, from that toil  
Returned with sinews weakened and relaxed,  
This generous Youth, too negligent of self,  
Plunged—'mid a gay and busy throng convened  
To wash the fleeces of his Father's flock—  
Into the chilling flood. Convulsions dire  
Seized him, that self-same night ; and through the space  
Of twelve ensuing days his frame was wrenched,  
Till nature rested from her work in death.  
To him, thus snatched away, his comrades paid  
A soldier's honours. At his funeral hour  
Bright was the sun, the sky a cloudless blue—  
A golden lustre slept upon the hills ;  
And if by chance a stranger, wandering there,  
From some commanding eminence had looked  
Down on this spot, well pleased would he have seen  
A glittering spectacle ; but every face  
Was pallid : seldom hath that eye been moist  
With tears, that wept not then ; nor were the few,  
Who from their dwellings came not forth to join  
In this sad service, less disturbed than we.  
They started at the tributary peal  
Of instantaneous thunder, which announced,  
Through the still air, the closing of the Grave ;  
And distant mountains echoed with a sound  
Of lamentation, never heard before ! ”

The Pastor ceased.—My venerable Friend  
Victoriously upraised his clear bright eye ;  
And, when that eulogy was ended, stood  
Enrapt, as if his inward sense perceived  
The prolongation of some still response,  
Sent by the ancient Soul of this wide land,  
The Spirit of its mountains and its seas,  
Its cities, temples, fields, its awful power,  
Its rights and virtues—by that Deity  
Descending, and supporting his pure heart  
With patriotic confidence and joy.  
And, at the last of those memorial words,  
The pining Solitary turned aside ;  
Whether through manly instinct to conceal  
Tender emotions spreading from the heart  
To his worn cheek ; or with uneasy shame  
For those cold humours of habitual spleen

That, fondly seeking in dispraise of man  
 Solace and self-excuse, had sometimes urged  
 To self-abuse a not ineloquent tongue.  
 —Right toward the sacred Edifice his steps  
 Had been directed ; and we saw him now  
 Intent upon a monumental stone,  
 Whose uncouth form was grafted on the wall,  
 Or rather seemed to have grown into the side  
 Of the rude pile ; as oft-times trunks of trees,  
 Where nature works in wild and craggy spots,  
 Are seen incorporate with the living rock—  
 To endure for aye. The Vicar, taking note  
 Of his employment, with a courteous smile  
 Exclaimed—

“ The sagest Antiquarian’s eye  
 That task would foil ; ” then, letting fall his voice  
 While he advanced, thus spake : “ Tradition tells  
 That, in Eliza’s golden days, a Knight  
 Came on a war-horse sumptuously attired,  
 And fixed his home in this sequestered vale.  
 ’Tis left untold if here he first drew breath,  
 Or as a stranger reached this deep recess,  
 Unknowing and unknown. A pleasing thought  
 I sometimes entertain, that haply bound  
 To Scotland’s court in service of his Queen,  
 Or sent on mission to some northern Chief  
 Of England’s realm, this vale he might have seen  
 With transient observation ; and thence caught  
 An image fair, which, brightening in his soul  
 When joy of war and pride of chivalry  
 Languished beneath accumulated years,  
 Had power to draw him from the world, resolved  
 To make that paradise his chosen home  
 To which his peaceful fancy oft had turned.

Vague thoughts are these ; but, if belief may rest  
 Upon unwritten story fondly traced  
 From sire to son, in this obscure retreat  
 The Knight arrived, with spear and shield, and borne  
 Upon a Charger gorgeously bedecked  
 With brodered housings. And the lofty Steed—  
 His sole companion, and his faithful friend,  
 Whom he, in gratitude, let loose to range  
 In fertile pastures—was beheld with eyes  
 Of admiration and delightful awe,

By those untravelled Dalesmen. With less pride,  
Yet free from touch of envious discontent,  
They saw a mansion at his bidding rise,  
Like a bright star, amid the lowly band  
Of their rude homesteads. Here the Warrior dwelt ;  
And, in that mansion, children of his own,  
Or kindred, gathered round him. As a tree  
That falls and disappears, the house is gone ;  
And, through providence or want of love  
For ancient worth and honourable things,  
The spear and shield are vanished, which the Knight  
Hung in his rustic hall. One ivied arch  
Myself have seen, a gateway, last remains  
Of that foundation in domestic care  
Raised by his hands. And now no trace is left  
Of the mild-hearted Champion, save this stone,  
Faithless memorial ! and his family name  
Borne by yon clustering cottages, that sprang  
From out the ruins of his stately lodge :  
These, and the name and title at full length,—  
Sir Alfred Jething, with appropriate words  
Accompanied, still extant, in a wreath  
Or posy, girding round the several fronts  
Of three clear-sounding and harmonious bells,  
That in the steeple hang, his pious gift."

"So fails, so languishes, grows dim, and dies,"  
The grey-haired Wanderer pensively exclaimed,  
"All that this world is proud of. From their spheres  
The stars of human glory are cast down ;  
Perish the roses and the flowers of kings,  
Princes, and emperors, and the crowns and palms  
Of all the mighty, withered and consumed !  
Nor is power given to lowliest innocence  
Long to protect her own. The man himself  
Departs ; and soon is spent the line of those  
Who, in the bodily image, in the mind,  
In heart or soul, in station or pursuit,  
Did most resemble him. Degrees and ranks,  
Fraternalities and orders—heaping high  
New wealth upon the burthen of the old,  
And placing trust in privilege confirmed  
And re-confirmed—are scoffed at with a smile  
Of greedy foretaste, from the secret stand  
Of Desolation, aimed : to slow decline

These yield, and these to sudden overthrow :  
 Their virtue, service, happiness, and state  
 Expire ; and nature's pleasant robe of green,  
 Humanity's appointed shroud, enwraps  
 Their monuments and their memory. The vast Frame  
 Of social nature changes evermore  
 Her organs and her members, with decay  
 Restless, and restless generation, powers  
 And functions dying and produced at need,—  
 And by this law the mighty whole subsists :  
 With an ascent and progress in the main ;  
 Yet, oh ! how disproportioned to the hopes  
 And expectations of self-flattering minds !

The courteous Knight, whose bones are here interred,  
 Lived in an age conspicuous as our own  
 For strife and ferment in the minds of men ;  
 Whence alteration in the forms of things,  
 Various and vast. A memorable age !  
 Which did to him assign a pensive lot—  
 To linger 'mid the last of those bright clouds  
 That, on the steady breeze of honour, sailed  
 In long procession calm and beautiful.  
 He who had seen his own bright order fade,  
 And its devotion gradually decline,  
 (While war, relinquishing the lance and shield,  
 Her temper changed, and bowed to other laws)  
 Had also witnessed, in his morn of life,  
 That violent commotion, which o'erthrew,  
 In town and city and sequestered glen,  
 Altar, and cross, and church of solemn roof,  
 And old religious house—pile after pile ;  
 And shook their tenants out into the fields,  
 Like wild beasts without home ! Their hour was come ;  
 But why no softening thought of gratitude,  
 No just remembrance, scruple, or wise doubt ?  
 Benevolence is mild ; nor borrows help,  
 Save at worst need, from bold impetuous force,  
 Fittest allied to anger and revenge.  
 But Human-kind rejoices in the might  
 Of mutability ; and airy hopes,  
 Dancing around her, hinder and disturb  
 Those meditations of the soul that feed  
 The retrospective virtues. Festive songs  
 Break from the maddened nations at the sight

Of sudden overthrow ; and cold neglect  
Is the sure consequence of slow decay.

Even," said the Wanderer, "as that courteous Knight,  
Bound by his vow to labour for redress  
Of all who suffer wrong, and to enact  
By sword and lance the law of gentleness,  
(If I may venture of myself to speak,  
Trusting that not incongruously I blend  
Low things with lofty) I too shall be doomed  
To outlive the kindly use and fair esteem  
Of the poor calling which my youth embraced  
With no unworthy prospect. But enough ;  
—Thoughts crowd upon me—and 'twere seemlier now  
To stop, and yield our gracious Teacher thanks  
For the pathetic records which his voice  
Hath here delivered ; words of heartfelt truth,  
Tending to patience when affliction strikes ;  
To hope and love ; to confident repose  
In God ; and reverence for the dust of Man."

## BOOK EIGHTH

## THE PARSONAGE

## ARGUMENT

Pastor's apology and apprehensions that he might have detained his Auditors too long, with the Pastor's invitation to his house—Solitary disinclined to comply—Rallies the Wanderer—And playfully draws a comparison between his itinerant profession and that of the Knight-errant—Which leads to Wanderer's giving an account of changes in the Country from the manufacturing spirit—Favourable effects—The other side of the picture, and chiefly as it has affected the humbler classes—Wanderer asserts the hollowness of all national grandeur if unsupported by moral worth—Physical science unable to support itself—Lamentations over an excess of manufacturing industry among the humbler Classes of Society—Picture of a Child employed in a Cotton-mill—Ignorance and degradation of Children among the agricultural Population reviewed—Conversation broken off by a renewed Invitation from the Pastor—Path leading to his House—Its appearance described—His Daughter—His Wife—His Son (a Boy) enters with his Companion—Their happy appearance—The Wanderer how affected by the sight of them.

THE pensive Sceptic of the lonely vale  
To those acknowledgments subscribed his own,  
With a sedate compliance, which the Priest  
Failed not to notice, inly pleased, and said :—  
" If ye, by whom invited I began  
These narratives of calm and humble life,

Be satisfied, 'tis well,—the end is gained ;  
 And, in return for sympathy bestowed  
 And patient listening, thanks accept from me.  
 —Life, death, eternity ! momentous themes  
 Are they—and might demand a seraph's tongue,  
 Were they not equal to their own support ;  
 And therefore no incompetence of mine  
 Could do them wrong. The universal forms  
 Of human nature, in a spot like this,  
 Present themselves at once to all men's view :  
 Ye wished for act and circumstance, that make  
 The individual known and understood ;  
 And such as my best judgment could select  
 From what the place afforded, have been given ;  
 Though apprehensions crossed me that my zeal  
 To his might well be likened, who unlocks  
 A cabinet stored with gems and pictures—draws  
 His treasures forth, soliciting regard  
 To this, and this, as worthier than the last,  
 Till the spectator, who awhile was pleased  
 More than the exhibitor himself, becomes  
 Weary and faint, and longs to be released.  
 —But let us hence ! my dwelling is in sight,  
 And there—”

At this the Solitary shrunk  
 With backward will ; but, wanting not address  
 That inward motion to disguise, he said  
 To his Compatriot, smiling as he spake ;  
 —“The peaceable remains of this good Knight  
 Would be disturbed, I fear, with wrathful scorn,  
 If consciousness could reach him where he lies  
 That one, albeit of these degenerate times,  
 Deploring changes past, or dreading change  
 Foreseen, had dared to couple, even in thought,  
 The fine vocation of the sword and lance  
 With the gross aims and body-bending toil  
 Of a poor brotherhood who walk the earth  
 Pitied, and, where they are not known, despised.

Yet, by the good Knight's leave, the two estates  
 Are graced with some resemblance. Errant those,  
 Exiles and wanderers—and the like are these ;  
 Who, with their burthen, traverse hill and dale,  
 Carrying relief for nature's simple wants.  
 —What though no higher recompense be sought

Than honest maintenance, by irksome toil  
Full oft procured, yet may they claim respect,  
Among the intelligent, for what this course  
Enables them to be and to perform.  
Their tardy steps give leisure to observe,  
While solitude permits the mind to feel ;  
Instructs, and prompts her to supply defects  
By the division of her inward self  
For grateful converse : and to these poor men  
Nature (I but repeat your favourite boast)  
Is bountiful—go wheresoe'er they may ;  
Kind nature's various wealth is all their own.  
Versed in the characters of men ; and bound,  
By ties of daily interest, to maintain  
Conciliatory manners and smooth speech ;  
Such have been, and still are in their degree,  
Examples efficacious to refine  
Rude intercourse ; apt agents to expel,  
By importation of unlooked-for arts,  
Barbarian torpor, and blind prejudice ;  
Raising, through just gradation, savage life  
To rustic, and the rustic to urbane.  
—Within their moving magazines is lodged  
Power that comes forth to quicken and exalt  
Affections seated in the mother's breast,  
And in the lover's fancy ; and to feed  
The sober sympathies of long-tried friends.  
—By these Itinerants, as experienced men,  
Counsel is given ; contention they appease  
With gentle language ; in remotest wilds,  
Tears wipe away, and pleasant tidings bring ;  
Could the proud quest of chivalry do more ? ”

“ Happy,” rejoined the Wanderer, “ they who gain  
A panegyric from your generous tongue !  
But, if to these Wayfarers once pertained  
Aught of romantic interest, it is gone.  
Their purer service, in this realm at least,  
Is past for ever.—An inventive Age  
Has wrought, if not with speed of magic, yet  
To most strange issues. I have lived to mark  
A new and unforeseen creation rise  
From out the labours of a peaceful Land  
Wielding her potent enginery to frame  
And to produce, with appetite as keen

As that of war, which rests not night or day,  
Industrious to destroy! With fruitless pains  
Might one like me ~~now~~ visit many a tract  
Which, in his youth, he trod, and trod again,  
A lone pedestrian with a scanty freight,  
Wished-for, or welcome, wheresoe'er he came—  
Among the tenantry of thorp and vill;  
Or straggling burgh, of ancient charter proud,  
And dignified by battlements and towers  
Of some stern castle, mouldering on the brow  
Of a green hill or bank of rugged stream.  
The foot-path faintly marked, the horse-track wild,  
And formidable length of plashy lane,  
(Prized avenues ere others had been shaped  
Or easier links connecting place with place)  
Have vanished—swallowed up by stately roads  
Easy and bold, that penetrate the gloom  
Of Britain's farthest glens. The Earth has lent  
Her waters, Air her breezes; and the sail  
Of traffic glides with ceaseless intercourse,  
Glistening along the low and woody dale;  
Or, in its progress, on the lofty side,  
Of some bare hill, with wonder kenned from far.

Meanwhile, at social Industry's command,  
How quick, how vast an increase! From the germ  
Of some poor hamlet, rapidly produced  
Here a huge town, continuous and compact,  
Hiding the face of earth for leagues—and there,  
Where not a habitation stood before,  
Abodes of men irregularly massed  
Like trees in forests,—spread through spacious tracts,  
O'er which the smoke of unremitting fires  
Hangs permanent, and plentiful as wreaths  
Of vapour glittering in the morning sun.  
And, wheresoe'er the traveller turns his steps,  
He sees the barren wilderness erased,  
Or disappearing; triumph that proclaims  
How much the mild Directress of the plough  
Owes to alliance with these new-born arts!  
—Hence is the wide sea peopled,—hence the shores  
Of Britain are resorted to by ships  
Freighted from every climate of the world  
With the world's choicest produce. Hence that sum  
Of keels that rest within her crowded ports,

Or ride at anchor in her sounds and bays ;  
That animating spectacle of sails  
That, through her inland regions, to and fro  
Pass with the respirations of the tide,  
Perpetual, multitudinous ! Finally,  
Hence a dread arm of floating power, a voice  
Of thunder daunting those who would approach  
With hostile purposes the blessed Isle,  
Truth's consecrated residence, the seat  
Impregnable of Liberty and Peace.

And yet, O happy Pastor of a flock  
Faithfully watched, and, by that loving care  
And Heaven's good providence, preserved from taint !  
With you I grieve, when on the darker side  
Of this great change I look ; and there behold  
Such outrage done to nature as compels  
The indignant power to justify herself ;  
Yea, to avenge her violated rights,  
For England's bane.—When soothing darkness spreads  
O'er hill and vale," the Wanderer thus expressed  
His recollections, "and the punctual stars,  
While all things else are gathering to their homes,  
Advance, and in the firmament of heaven  
Glitter—but undisturbing, undisturbed ;  
As if their silent company were charged  
With peaceful admonitions for the heart  
Of all-beholding Man, earth's thoughtful lord ;  
Then, in full many a region, once like this  
The assured domain of calm simplicity  
And pensive quiet, an unnatural light  
Prepared for never-resting Labour's eyes  
Breaks from a many-windowed fabric huge ;  
And at the appointed hour a bell is heard—  
Of harsher import than the curfew-knoll  
That spake the Norman Conqueror's stern behest—  
A local summons to unceasing toil !  
Disgorged are now the ministers of day ;  
And, as they issue from the illumined pile,  
A fresh band meets them, at the crowded door—  
And in the courts—and where the rumbling stream,  
That turns the multitude of dizzy wheels,  
Glares, like a troubled spirit, in its bed  
Among the rocks below. Men, maidens, youths,  
Mother and little children, boys and girls,

Enter, and each the wonted task resumes  
Within this temple, where is offered up  
To Gain, the master idol of the realm,  
Perpetual sacrifice. Even thus of old  
Our ancestors, within the still domain  
Of vast cathedral or conventual church,  
Their vigils kept ; where tapers day and night  
On the dim altar burned continually,  
In token that the House was evermore  
Watching to God. Religious men were they ;  
Nor would their reason, tutored to aspire  
Above this transitory world, allow  
That there should pass a moment of the year,  
When in their land the Almighty's service ceased.

Triumph who will in these profaner rites  
Which we, a generation self-extolled,  
As zealously perform ! I cannot share  
His proud complacency :—yet do I exult,  
Casting reserve away, exult to see  
An intellectual mastery exercised  
O'er the blind elements ; a purpose given,  
A perseverance fed ; almost a soul  
Imparted—to brute matter. I rejoice,  
Measuring the force of those gigantic powers  
That, by the thinking mind, have been compelled  
To serve the will of feeble-bodied Man.  
For with the sense of admiration blends  
The animating hope that time may come  
When, strengthened, yet not dazzled, by the might  
Of this dominion over nature gained,  
Men of all lands shall exercise the same  
In due proportion to their country's need,  
Learning, though late, that all true glory rests,  
All praise, all safety, and all happiness,  
Upon the moral law. Egyptian Thebes,  
Tyre, by the margin of the sounding waves,  
Palmyra, central in the desert, fell ;  
And the Arts died by which they had been raised.  
—Call Archimedes from his buried tomb  
Upon the grave of vanished Syracuse,  
And feelingly the Sage shall make report  
How insecure, how baseless in itself,  
Is the Philosophy whose sway depends  
On mere material instruments ;—how weak

Those arts, and high inventions, if unpropred  
By virtue.—He, sighing with pensive grief,  
Amid his calm abstractions, would admit  
That not the slender privilege is theirs  
To save themselves from blank forgetfulness !”

When from the Wanderer's lips these words had fallen,  
I said, “And, did in truth those vaunted Arts  
Possess such privilege, how could we escape  
Sadness and keen regret, we who revere,  
And would preserve as things above all price,  
The old domestic morals of the land,  
Her simple manners, and the stable worth  
That dignified and cheered a low estate ?  
Oh ! where is now the character of peace,  
Sobriety, and order, and chaste love,  
And honest dealing, and untainted speech,  
And pure good-will, and hospitable cheer ;  
That made the very thought of country-life  
A thought of refuge, for a mind detained  
Reluctantly amid the bustling crowd ?  
Where now the beauty of the sabbath kept  
With conscientious reverence, as a day  
By the almighty Lawgiver pronounced  
Holy and blest ? and where the winning grace  
Of all the lighter ornaments attached  
To time and season, as the year rolled round ?”

“Fled !” was the Wanderer's passionate response.  
“Fled utterly ! or only to be traced  
In a few fortunate retreats like this ;  
Which I behold with trembling, when I think  
What lamentable change, a year—a month—  
May bring ; that brook converting as it runs  
Into an instrument of deadly bane  
For those, who, yet untempted to forsake  
The simple occupations of their sires,  
Drink the pure water of its innocent stream  
With lip almost as pure.—Domestic bliss  
(Or call it comfort, by a humbler name,)   
How art thou blighted for the poor Man's heart !  
Lo ! in such neighbourhood, from morn to eve,  
The habitations empty ! or perchance  
The Mother left alone,—no helping hand  
To rock the cradle of her peevish babe ;

No daughters round her, busy at the wheel,  
 Or in dispatch of each day's little growth  
 Of household occupation ; no nice arts  
 Of needle-work ; no bustle at the fire,  
 Where once the dinner was prepared with pride ;  
 Nothing to speed the day, or cheer the mind ;  
 Nothing to praise, to teach, or to command !

The Father, if perchance he still retain  
 His old employments, goes to field or wood,  
 No longer led or followed by the Sons ;  
 Idlers perchance they were,—but in *his* sight ;  
 Breathing fresh air, and treading the green earth :  
 'Till their short holiday of childhood ceased,  
 Ne'er to return ! That birthright now is lost.  
 Economists will tell you that the State  
 Thrives by the forfeiture—unfeeling thought,  
 And false as monstrous ! Can the mother thrive  
 By the destruction of her innocent sons  
 In whom a premature necessity  
 Blocks out the forms of nature, preconsumes  
 The reason, famishes the heart, shuts up  
 The infant Being in itself, and makes  
 Its very spring a season of decay !  
 The lot is wretched, the condition sad,  
 Whether a pining discontent survive,  
 And thirst for change ; or habit hath subdued  
 The soul deprest, dejected—even to love  
 Of her close tasks, and long captivity.

Oh, banish far such wisdom as condemns  
 A native Briton to these inward chains,  
 Fixed in his soul, so early and so deep ;  
 Without his own consent, or knowledge, fixed !  
 He is a slave to whom release comes not,  
 And cannot come. The boy, where'er he turns,  
 Is still a prisoner ; when the wind is up  
 Among the clouds, and roars through the ancient woods ;  
 Or when the sun is shining in the east,  
 Quiet and calm. Behold him—in the school  
 Of his attainments ? no ; but with the air  
 Fanning his temples under heaven's blue arch.  
 His raiment, whitened o'er with cotton-flakes  
 Or locks of wool, announces whence he comes.  
 Creeping his gait and cowering, his lip pale,

His respiration quick and audible ;  
 And scarcely could you fancy that a gleam  
 Could break from out those languid eyes, or a blush  
 Mantle upon his cheek. Is this the form,  
 Is that the countenance, and such the port,  
 Of no mean Being? One who should be clothed  
 With dignity befitting his proud hope ;  
 Who, in his very childhood, should appear  
 Sublime from present purity and joy !  
 The limbs increase ; but liberty of mind  
 Is gone for ever ; and this organic frame,  
 So joyful in its motions, is become  
 Dull, to the joy of her own motions dead ;  
 And even the touch, so exquisitely poured  
 Through the whole body, with a languid will  
 Performs its functions ; rarely competent  
 To impress a vivid feeling on the mind  
 Of what there is delightful in the breeze,  
 The gentle visitations of the sun,  
 Or lapse of liquid element—by hand,  
 Or foot, or lip, in summer's warmth—perceived.  
 —Can hope look forward to a manhood raised  
 On such foundations?"

"Hope is none for him!"

The pale Recluse indignantly exclaimed,  
 "And tens of thousands suffer wrong as deep.  
 Yet be it asked, in justice to our age,  
 If there were not, before those arts appeared,  
 These structures rose, commingling old and young,  
 And unripe sex with sex, for mutual taint ;  
 If there were not, *then*, in our far-famed Isle,  
 Multitudes, who from infancy had breathed  
 Air unimprisoned, and had lived at large ;  
 Yet walked beneath the sun, in human shape,  
 As abject, as degraded? At this day,  
 Who shall enumerate the crazy huts  
 And tottering hovels, whence do issue forth  
 A ragged Offspring, with their upright hair  
 Crowned like the image of fantastic Fear ;  
 Or wearing, (shall we say?) in that white growth  
 An ill-adjusted turban, for defence  
 Or fierceness, wreathed around their sunburnt brows  
 By savage Nature? Shrivelled are their lips,  
 Naked, and coloured like the soil, the feet  
 On which they stand ; as if thereby they drew

Some nourishment, as trees do by their roots,  
 From earth, the common mother of us all.  
 Figure and mien, complexion and attire,  
 Are leagued to strike dismay; but outstretched hand  
 And whining voice denote them supplicants  
 For the least boon that pity can bestow.  
 Such on the breast of darksome heaths are found;  
 And with their parents occupy the skirts  
 Of furze-clad commons; such are born and reared  
 At the mine's mouth under impending rocks;  
 Or dwell in chambers of some natural cave;  
 Or where their ancestors erected huts,  
 For the convenience of unlawful gain,  
 In forest purlieus; and the like are bred,  
 All England through, where nooks and slips of ground  
 Purloined, in times less jealous than our own,  
 From the green margin of the public way,  
 A residence afford them, 'mid the bloom  
 And gaiety of cultivated fields.  
 Such (we will hope the lowest in the scale)  
 Do I remember oft-times to have seen  
 'Mid Buxton's dreary heights. In earnest watch,  
 Till the swift vehicle approach, they stand;  
 Then, following closely with the cloud of dust,  
 An uncouth feat exhibit, and are gone  
 Heels over head, like tumblers on a stage.  
 —Up from the ground they snatch the copper coin,  
 And, on the freight of merry passengers  
 Fixing a steady eye, maintain their speed;  
 And spin—and pant—and overhead again,  
 Wild pursuivants! until their breath is lost,  
 Or bounty tires—and every face, that smiled  
 Encouragement, hath ceased to look that way.  
 —But, like the vagrants of the gipsy tribe,  
 These, bred to little pleasure in themselves,  
 Are profitless to others.

Turn we then  
 To Britons born and bred within the pale  
 Of civil polity, and early trained  
 To earn, by wholesome labour in the field,  
 The bread they eat. A sample should I give  
 Of what this stock hath long produced to enrich  
 The tender age of life, ye would exclaim,  
 'Is this the whistling plough-boy whose shrill notes  
 Impart new gladness to the morning air!'

Forgive me if I venture to suspect  
That many, sweet to hear of in soft verse,  
Are of no finer frame. Stiff are his joints;  
Beneath a cumbrous frock, that to the knees  
Invests the thriving churl, his legs appear,  
Fellows to those that lustily upheld  
The wooden stools for everlasting use,  
Whereon our fathers sate. And mark his brow  
Under whose shaggy canopy are set  
Two eyes—not dim, but of a healthy stare—  
Wide, sluggish, blank, and ignorant, and strange—  
Proclaiming boldly that they never drew  
A look or motion of intelligence  
From infant-conning of the Christ-cross-row,  
Or puzzling through a primer, line by line,  
Till perfect mastery crown the pains at last.  
—What kindly warmth from touch of fostering hand,  
What penetrating power of sun or breeze,  
Shall e'er dissolve the crust wherein his soul  
Sleeps, like a caterpillar sheathed in ice?  
This torpor is no pitiable work  
Of modern ingenuity; no town  
Nor crowded city can be taxed with aught  
Of sottish vice or desperate breach of law,  
To which (and who can tell where or how soon?)  
He may be roused. This Boy the fields produce:  
His spade and hoe, mattock and glittering scythe,  
The carter's whip that on his shoulder rests  
In air high-towering with a boorish pomp,  
The sceptre of his sway; his country's name,  
Her equal rights, her churches and her schools—  
What have they done for him? And, let me ask,  
For tens of thousands uninformed as he?  
In brief, what liberty of *mind* is here?"

This ardent sally pleased the mild good Man,  
To whom the appeal couched in its closing words  
Was pointedly addressed; and to the thoughts  
That, in assent or opposition, rose  
Within his mind, he seemed prepared to give  
Prompt utterance; but the Vicar interposed  
With invitation urgently renewed.  
—We followed, taking, as he led, a path  
Along a hedge of hollies dark and tall,  
Whose flexile boughs low bending with a weight

Of leafy spray, concealed the stems and roots  
 That gave them nourishment. When frosty winds  
 Howl from the north, what kindly warmth, methought,  
 Is here—how grateful this impervious screen!  
 —Not shaped by simple wearing of the foot  
 On rural business passing to and fro  
 Was the commodious walk: a careful hand  
 Had marked the line, and strewn its surface o'er  
 With pure cerulean gravel, from the heights  
 Fetched by a neighbouring brook.—Across the vale  
 The stately fence accompanied our steps;  
 And thus the pathway, by perennial green  
 Guarded and graced, seemed fashioned to unite,  
 As by a beautiful yet solemn chain,  
 The Pastor's mansion with the house of prayer.

Like image of solemnity, conjoined  
 With feminine allurements soft and fair,  
 The mansion's self displayed;—a reverend pile  
 With bold projections and recesses deep;  
 Shadowy, yet gay and lightsome as it stood  
 Fronting the noontide sun. We paused to admire  
 The pillared porch, elaborately embossed;  
 The low wide windows with their mullions old;  
 The cornice, richly fretted, of grey stone;  
 And that smooth slope from which the dwelling rose,  
 By beds and banks Arcadian of gay flowers  
 And flowering shrubs, protected and adorned:  
 Profusion bright! and every flower assuming  
 A more than natural vividness of hue,  
 From unaffected contrast with the gloom  
 Of sober cypress, and the darker foil  
 Of yew, in which survived some traces, here  
 Not unbecoming, of grotesque device  
 And uncouth fancy. From behind the roof  
 Rose the slim ash and massy sycamore,  
 Blending their diverse foliage with the green  
 Of ivy, flourishing and thick, that clasped  
 The huge round chimneys, harbour of delight  
 For wren and redbreast,—where they sit and sing  
 Their slender ditties when the trees are bare.  
 Nor must I leave untouched (the picture else  
 Were incomplete) a relique of old times  
 Happily spared, a little Gothic niche  
 Of nicest workmanship; that once had held

The sculptured image of some patron-saint,  
Or of the blessed Virgin, looking down  
On all who entered those religious doors.

But lo! where from the rocky garden-mountain  
Crowned by its antique summer-house—descends  
Light as the silver fawn, a radiant Girl;  
For she hath recognised her honoured friend,  
The Wanderer ever welcome! A prompt kiss  
The gladsome Child bestows at his request;  
And, up the flowery lawn as we advance,  
Hangs on the old Man with a bappy look,  
And with a pretty restless hand of love.  
—We enter—by the Lady of the place  
Cordially greeted. Graceful was her port:  
A lofty stature undepressed by time,  
Whose visitation had not wholly spared  
The finer lineaments of form and face;  
To that complexion brought which prudence trusts in  
And wisdom loves.—But when a stately ship  
Sails in smooth weather by the placid coast  
On homeward voyage, what—if wind and wave,  
And hardship undergone in various climes,  
Have caused her to abate the virgin pride,  
And that full trim of inexperienced hope  
With which she left her haven—not for this,  
Should the sun strike her, and the impartial breeze  
Play on her streamers, fails she to assume  
Brightness and touching beauty of her own,  
That charm all eyes. So bright, so fair, appeared  
This goodly Matron, shining in the beams  
Of unexpected pleasure.—Soon the board  
Was spread, and we partook a plain repast.

Here, resting in cool shelter, we beguiled  
The mid-day hours with desultory talk;  
From trivial themes to general argument  
Passing, as accident or fancy led,  
Or courtesy prescribed. While question rose  
And answer flowed, the fetters of reserve  
Dropping from every mind, the Solitary  
Resumed the manners of his happier days;  
And in the various conversation bore  
A willing, nay, at times, a forward part;  
Yet with the grace of one who in the world  
Had learned the art of pleasing, and had now

Occasion given him to display his skill,  
 Upon the stedfast vantage-ground of truth.  
 He gazed, with admiration unsuppressed,  
 Upon the landscape of the sun-bright vale,  
 Seen, from the shady room in which we sate,  
 In softened perspective ; and more than once  
 Praised the consummate harmony serene  
 Of gravity and elegance, diffused  
 Around the mansion and its whole domain ;  
 Not, doubtless, without help of female taste  
 And female care.—“ A blessed lot is yours ! ”  
 The words escaped his lip, with a tender sigh  
 Breathed over them : but suddenly the door  
 Flew open, and a pair of lusty Boys  
 Appeared, confusion checking their delight.  
 —Not brothers they in feature or attire,  
 But fond companions, so I guessed, in field,  
 And by the river's margin—whence they come,  
 Keen anglers with unusual spoil elated.  
 One bears a willow-pannier on his back,  
 The boy of plainer garb, whose blush survives  
 More deeply tinged. Twin might the other be  
 To that fair girl who from the garden-mount  
 Bounded :—triumphant entry this for him !  
 Between his hands he holds a smooth blue stone,  
 On whose capacious surface see outspread  
 Large store of gleaming crimson-spotted trouts ;  
 Ranged side by side, and lessening by degrees  
 Up to the dwarf that tops the pinnacle.  
 Upon the board he lays the sky-blue stone  
 With its rich freight ; their number he proclaims ;  
 Tells from what pool the noblest had been dragged ;  
 And where the very monarch of the brook,  
 After long struggle, had escaped at last—  
 Stealing alternately at them and us  
 (As doth his comrade too) a look of pride :  
 And, verily, the silent creatures made  
 A splendid sight, together thus exposed ;  
 Dead—but not sullied or deformed by death,  
 That seemed to pity what he could not spare.

But oh, the animation in the mien  
 Of those two boys ! yea in the very words  
 With which the young narrator was inspired,  
 When, as our questions led, he told at large  
 Of that day's prowess ! Him might I compare,

His looks, tones, gestures, eager eloquence,  
 To a bold brook that splits for better speed,  
 And at the self-same moment, works its way  
 Through many channels, ever and anon  
 Parted and re-united: his compeer  
 To the still lake, whose stillness is to sight  
 As beautiful—as grateful to the mind.  
 —But to what object shall the lovely Girl  
 Be likened? She whose countenance and air  
 Unite the graceful qualities of both,  
 Even as she shares the pride and joy of both.

My grey-haired Friend was moved; his vivid eye  
 Glistened with tenderness; his mind, I knew,  
 Was full; and had, I doubted not, returned,  
 Upon this impulse, to the theme—erewhile  
 Abruptly broken off. The ruddy boys  
 Withdrew, on summons to their well-earned meal;  
 And He—to whom all tongues resigned their rights  
 With willingness, to whom the general ear  
 Listened with readier patience than to strain  
 Of music, lute or harp, a long delight  
 That ceased not when his voice had ceased—as One  
 Who from truth's central point serenely views  
 The compass of his argument—began  
 Mildly, and with a clear and steady tone.

## BOOK NINTH

DISCOURSE OF THE WANDERER, AND AN EVENING VISIT  
TO THE LAKE

## ARGUMENT

Wanderer asserts that an active principle pervades the Universe, its noblest seat the human soul—How lively this principle is in Childhood—Hence the delight in old Age of looking back upon Childhood—The dignity, powers, and privileges of Age asserted—These not to be looked for generally but under a just government—Right of a human Creature to be exempt from being considered as a mere Instrument—The condition of multitudes deplored—Former conversation recurred to, and the Wanderer's opinions set in a clearer light—Truth placed within reach of the humblest—Equality—Happy state of the two Boys again adverted to—Earnest wish expressed for a System of National Education established universally by Government—Glorious effects of this foretold—Walk to the Lake—Grand spectacle from the side of a hill—Address of Priest to the Supreme Being—In the course of which he contrasts with ancient Barbarism the present appearance of the scene before him—The change ascribed to Christianity—Apostrophe to his flock, living and dead—Gratitude to the Almighty—Return over the Lake—Parting with the Solitary—Under what circumstances.

"To every Form of being is assigned,"  
 Thus calmly spake the venerable Sage,  
 "An *active* Principle :—howe'er removed  
 From sense and observation, it subsists  
 In all things, in all natures ; in the stars  
 Of azure heaven, the unenduring clouds,  
 In flower and tree, in every pebbly stone  
 That paves the brooks, the stationary rocks,  
 The moving waters, and the invisible air.  
 Whate'er exists hath properties that spread  
 Beyond itself, communicating good,  
 A simple blessing, or with evil mixed ;  
 Spirit that knows no insulated spot,  
 No chasm, no solitude ; from link to link  
 It circulates, the Soul of all the worlds.  
 This is the freedom of the universe ;  
 Unfolded still the more, more visible,  
 The more we know ; and yet is revered least,  
 And least respected in the human Mind,  
 Its most apparent home. The food of hope  
 Is meditated action ; robbed of this  
 Her sole support, she languishes and dies.  
 We perish also ; for we live by hope  
 And by desire ; we see by the glad light  
 And breathe the sweet air of futurity ;  
 And so we live, or else we have no life.  
 To-morrow—nay perchance this very hour  
 (For every moment hath its own to-morrow !)  
 Those blooming Boys, whose hearts are almost sick  
 With present triumph, will be sure to find  
 A field before them freshened with the dew  
 Of other expectations ;—in which course  
 Their happy year spins round. The youth obeys  
 A like glad impulse ; and so moves the man  
 'Mid all his apprehensions, cares, and fears,—  
 Or so he ought to move. Ah ! why in age  
 Do we revert so fondly to the walks  
 Of childhood—but that there the Soul discerns  
 The dear memorial footsteps unimpaired  
 Of her own native vigour ; thence can hear  
 Reverberations ; and a choral song,  
 Commingling with the incense that ascends,  
 Undaunted, toward the imperishable heavens,  
 From her own lonely altar ?

Do not think

That good and wise ever will be allowed,  
Though strength decay, to breathe in such estate  
As shall divide them wholly from the stir  
Of hopeful nature. Rightly is it said  
That Man descends into the VALE of years ;  
Yet have I thought that we might also speak,  
And not presumptuously, I trust, of Age,  
As of a final EMINENCE ; though bare  
In aspect and forbidding, yet a point  
On which 'tis not impossible to sit  
In awful sovereignty ; a place of power,  
A throne, that may be likened unto his,  
Who, in some placid day of summer, looks  
Down from a mountain-top,—say one of those  
High peaks, that bound the vale where now we are.  
Faint, and diminished to the gazing eye,  
Forest and field, and hill and dale appear,  
With all the shapes over their surface spread :  
But, while the gross and visible frame of things  
Relinquishes its hold upon the sense,  
Yea almost on the Mind herself, and seems  
All unsubstantialized,—how loud the voice  
Of waters, with invigorated peal  
From the full river in the vale below,  
Ascending ! For on that superior height  
Who sits, is disencumbered from the press  
Of near obstructions, and is privileged  
To breathe in solitude, above the host  
Of ever-humming insects, 'mid thin air  
That suits not them. The murmur of the leaves  
Many and idle, visits not his ear :  
This he is freed from, and from thousand notes  
(Not less unceasing, not less vain than these,)  
By which the finer passages of sense  
Are occupied ; and the Soul, that would incline  
To listen, is prevented or deterred.

And may it not be hoped, that, placed by age  
In like removal, tranquil though severe,  
We are not so removed for utter loss ;  
But for some favour, suited to our need ?  
What more than that the severing should confer  
Fresh power to commune with the invisible world,  
And hear the mighty stream of tendency  
Uttering, for elevation of our thought,  
A clear sonorous voice, inaudible

To the vast multitude ; whose doom it is  
To run the giddy round of vain delight,  
Or fret and labour on the Plain below.

But, if to such sublime ascent the hopes  
Of Man may rise, as to a welcome close  
And termination of his mortal course ;  
Then only can such hope inspire whose minds  
Have not been starved by absolute neglect ;  
Nor bodies crushed by unremitting toil ;  
To whom kind Nature, therefore, may afford  
Proof of the sacred love she bears for all ;  
Whose birthright Reason, therefore, may ensure.  
For me, consulting what I feel within  
In times when most existence with herself  
Is satisfied, I cannot but believe,  
That, far as kindly Nature hath free scope  
And Reason's sway predominates ; even so far,  
Country, society, and time itself,  
That saps the individual's bodily frame,  
And lays the generations low in dust,  
Do, by the almighty Ruler's grace, partake  
Of one maternal spirit, bringing forth  
And cherishing with ever-constant love,  
That tires not, nor betrays. Our life is turned  
Out of her course, wherever man is made  
An offering, or a sacrifice, a tool  
Or implement, a passive thing employed  
As a brute mean, without acknowledgment  
Of common right or interest in the end ;  
Used or abused, as selfishness may prompt.  
Say, what can follow for a rational soul  
Perverted thus, but weakness in all good,  
And strength in evil ? Hence an after-call  
For chastisement, and custody, and bonds,  
And oft-times Death, avenger of the past,  
And the sole guardian in whose hands we dare  
Entrust the future.—Not for these sad issues  
Was Man created ; but to obey the law  
Of life, and hope, and action. And 'tis known  
That when we stand upon our native soil,  
Unelbowed by such objects as oppress  
Our active powers, those powers themselves become  
Strong to subvert our noxious qualities :  
They sweep distemper from the busy day,  
And make the chalice of the big round year

Run o'er with gladness; whence the Being moves  
In beauty through the world; and all who see  
Bless him, rejoicing in his neighbourhood."

"Then," said the Solitary, "by what force  
Of language shall a feeling heart express  
Her sorrow for that multitude in whom  
We look for health from seeds that have been sown  
In sickness, and for increase in a power  
That works but by extinction? On themselves  
They cannot lean, nor turn to their own hearts  
To know what they must do; their wisdom is  
To look into the eyes of others, thence  
To be instructed what they must avoid:  
Or rather, let us say, how least observed,  
How with most quiet and most silent death,  
With the least taint and injury to the air  
The oppressor breathes, their human form divine,  
And their immortal soul, may waste away."

The Sage rejoined, "I thank you—you have spared  
My voice the utterance of a keen regret,  
A wide compassion which with you I share.  
When, heretofore, I placed before your sight  
A Little-one, subjected to the arts  
Of modern ingenuity, and made  
The senseless member of a vast machine,  
Serving as doth a spindle or a wheel;  
Think not, that, pitying him, I could forget  
The rustic Boy, who walks the fields, untaught;  
The slave of ignorance, and oft of want,  
And miserable hunger. Much, too much,  
Of this unhappy lot, in early youth  
We both have witnessed, lot which I myself  
Shared, though in mild and merciful degree:  
Yet was the mind to hindrances exposed,  
Through which I struggled, not without distress  
And sometimes injury, like a lamb enthralled  
Mid thorns and brambles; or a bird that breaks  
Through a strong net, and mounts upon the wind,  
Though with her plumes impaired. If they, whose souls  
Should open while they range the richer fields  
Of merry England, are obstructed less  
By indigence, their ignorance is not less,  
Nor less to be deplored. For who can doubt  
That tens of thousands at this day exist

Such as the boy you painted, lineal heirs  
 Of those who once were vassals of her soil,  
 Following its fortunes like the beasts or trees  
 Which it sustained. But no one takes delight  
 In this oppression ; none are proud of it ;  
 It bears no sounding name, nor ever bore ;  
 A standing grievance, an indigenous vice  
 Of every country under heaven. My thoughts  
 Were turned to evils that are new and chosen,  
 A bondage lurking under shape of good,—  
 Arts, in themselves beneficent and kind,  
 But all too fondly followed and too far ;—  
 To victims, which the merciful can see  
 Nor think that they are victims—turned to wrongs,  
 By women, who have children of their own,  
 Beheld without compassion, yea with praise !  
 I spake of mischief by the wise diffused  
 With gladness, thinking that the more it spreads  
 The healthier, the securer, we become ;  
 Delusion which a moment may destroy !  
 Lastly, I mourned for those whom I had seen  
 Corrupted and cast down, on favoured ground,  
 Where circumstance and nature had combined  
 To shelter innocence, and cherish love ;  
 Who, but for this intrusion, would have lived,  
 Possessed of health, and strength, and peace of mind ;  
 Thus would have lived, or never have been born.

Alas ! what differs more than man from man !  
 And whence that difference ? whence but from himself ?  
 For see the universal Race endowed  
 With the same upright form !—The sun is fixed,  
 And the infinite magnificence of heaven  
 Fixed, within reach of every human eye ;  
 The sleepless ocean murmurs for all ears ;  
 The vernal field infuses fresh delight  
 Into all hearts. Throughout the world of sense,  
 Even as an object is sublime or fair,  
 That object is laid open to the view  
 Without reserve or veil ; and as a power  
 Is salutary, or an influence sweet,  
 Are each and all enabled to perceive  
 That power, that influence, by impartial law.  
 Gifts nobler are vouchsafed alike to all ;  
 Reason, and, with that reason, smiles and tears ;  
 Imagination, freedom in the will ;

Conscience to guide and check ; and death to be  
Foretasted, immortality conceived  
By all,—a blissful immortality,  
To them whose holiness on earth shall make  
The Spirit capable of heaven, assured.  
Strange, then, nor less than monstrous, might be deemed  
The failure, if the Almighty, to this point  
Liberal and undistinguishing, should hide  
The excellence of moral qualities  
From common understanding ; leaving truth  
And virtue, difficult, abstruse, and dark ;  
Hard to be won, and only by a few ;  
Strange, should He deal herein with nice respects,  
And frustrate all the rest ! Believe it not :  
The primal duties shine aloft—like stars ;  
The charities that soothe, and heal, and bless,  
Are scattered at the feet of Man—like flowers.  
The generous inclination, the just rule,  
Kind wishes, and good actions, and pure thoughts—  
No mystery is here ! Here is no boon  
For high—yet not for low ; for proudly graced—  
Yet not for meek of heart. The smoke ascends  
To heaven as lightly from the cottage hearth  
As from the haughtiest palace. He, whose soul  
Ponders this true equality, may walk  
The fields of earth with gratitude and hope ;  
Yet, in that meditation, will he find  
Motive to sadder grief, as we have found ;  
Lamenting ancient virtues overthrown,  
And for the injustice grieving, that hath made  
So wide a difference between man and man.

Then let us rather fix our gladdened thoughts  
Upon the brighter scene. How blest that pair  
Of blooming Boys (*whom we beheld even now*),  
Blest in their several and their common lot !  
A few short hours of each returning day  
The thriving prisoners of their village school :  
And thence let loose, to seek their pleasant homes  
Or range the grassy lawn in vacancy :  
To breathe and to be happy, run and shout  
Idle,—but no delay, no harm, no loss ;  
For every genial power of heaven and earth,  
Through all the seasons of the changeful year,  
Obsequiously doth take upon herself  
To labour for them ; bringing each in turn

The tribute of enjoyment, knowledge, health,  
Beauty, or strength! Such privilege is theirs,  
Granted alike in the outset of their course  
To both; and, if that partnership must cease,  
I grieve not," to the Pastor here he turned,  
"Much as I glory in that child of yours,  
Repine not for his cottage-comrade, whom  
Belike no higher destiny awaits  
Than the old hereditary wish fulfilled;  
The wish for liberty to live—content  
With what Heaven grants, and die—in peace of mind,  
Within the bosom of his native vale.  
At least, whatever fate the noon of life  
Reserves for either, sure it is that both  
Have been permitted to enjoy the dawn;  
Whether regarded as a jocund time,  
That in itself may terminate, or lead  
In course of nature to a sober eve.  
Both have been fairly dealt with; looking back  
They will allow that justice has in them  
Been shown, alike to body and to mind."

He paused, as if revolving in his soul  
Some weighty matter; then, with fervent voice  
And an impassioned majesty, exclaimed—

"O for the coming of that glorious time  
When, prizing knowledge as her noblest wealth  
And best protection, this imperial Realm,  
While she exacts allegiance, shall admit  
An obligation, on her part, to *teach*  
Them who are born to serve her and obey;  
Binding herself by statute to secure  
For all the children whom her soil maintains  
The rudiments of letters, and inform  
The mind with moral and religious truth,  
Both understood and practised,—so that none,  
However destitute, be left to droop  
By timely culture unsustained; or run  
Into a wild disorder; or be forced  
To drudge through a weary life without the help  
Of intellectual implements and tools;  
A savage horde among the civilised,  
A servile band among the lordly free!  
This sacred right, the lisping babe proclaims  
To be inherent in him, by Heaven's will,

For the protection of his innocence ;  
And the rude boy—who, having overpast  
The sinless age, by conscience is enrolled,  
Yet mutinously knits his angry brow,  
And lifts his wilful hand on mischief bent,  
Or turns the godlike faculty of speech  
To impious use—by process indirect  
Declares his due, while he makes known his need.  
—This sacred right is fruitlessly announced,  
This universal plea in vain addressed,  
To eyes and ears of parents who themselves  
Did, in the time of their necessity,  
Urge it in vain ; and, therefore, like a prayer  
That from the humblest floor ascends to heaven,  
It mounts to meet the State's parental ear ;  
Who, if indeed she own a mother's heart,  
And be not most unfeelingly devoid  
Of gratitude to Providence, will grant  
The unquestionable good—which, England, safe  
From interference of external force,  
May grant at leisure ; without risk incurred  
That what in wisdom for herself she doth,  
Others shall e'er be able to undo.

Look ! and behold, from Calpe's sunburnt cliffs  
To the flat margin of the Baltic sea,  
Long-reverenced titles cast away as weeds ;  
Laws overturned ; and territory split,  
Like fields of ice rent by the polar wind,  
And forced to join in less obnoxious shapes  
Which, ere they gain consistence, by a gust  
Of the same breath are shattered and destroyed.  
Meantime the sovereignty of these fair Isles  
Remains entire and indivisible :  
And, if that ignorance were removed, which breeds  
Within the compass of their several shores  
Dark discontent, or loud commotion, each  
Might still preserve the beautiful repose  
Of heavenly bodies shining in their spheres.  
—The discipline of slavery is unknown  
Among us,—hence the more do we require  
The discipline of virtue ; order else  
Cannot subsist, nor confidence, nor peace.  
Thus, duties rising out of good possest,  
And prudent caution needful to avert  
Impending evil, equally require

That the whole people should be taught and trained.  
 So shall licentiousness and black resolve  
 Be rooted out, and virtuous habits take  
 Their place ; and genuine piety descend,  
 Like an inheritance, from age to age.

With such foundations laid, avaunt the fear  
 Of numbers crowded on their native soil,  
 To the prevention of all healthful growth  
 Through mutual injury ! Rather in the law  
 Of increase and the mandate from above  
 Rejoice !—and ye have special cause for joy.  
 —For, as the element of air affords  
 An easy passage to the industrious bees  
 Fraught with their burthens ; and a way as smooth  
 For those ordained to take their sounding flight  
 From the thronged hive, and settle where they list  
 In fresh abodes—their labour to renew ;  
 So the wide waters, open to the power,  
 The will, the instincts, and appointed needs  
 Of Britain, do invite her to cast off  
 Her swarms, and in succession send them forth ;  
 Bound to establish new communities  
 On every shore whose aspect favours hope  
 Or bold adventure ; promising to skill  
 And perseverance their deserved reward.

Yes," he continued, kindling as he spake,  
 "Change wide, and deep, and silently performed,  
 This Land shall witness ; and as days roll on,  
 Earth's universal frame shall feel the effect ;  
 Even till the smallest habitable rock,  
 Beaten by lonely billows, hear the songs  
 Of humanised society ; and bloom  
 With civil arts, that shall breathe forth their fragrance,  
 A grateful tribute to all-ruling Heaven.  
 From culture, unexclusively bestowed  
 On Albion's noble Race in freedom born,  
 Expect these mighty issues : from the pains  
 And faithful care of unambitious schools  
 Instructing simple childhood's ready ear :  
 Thence look for these magnificent results !  
 —Vast the circumference of hope—and ye  
 Are at its centre, British Lawgivers ;  
 Ah ! sleep not there in shame ! Shall Wisdom's voice  
 From out the bosom of these troubled times

Repeat the dictates of her calmer mind,  
And shall the venerable halls ye fill  
Refuse to echo the sublime decree?  
Trust not to partial care a general good ;  
Transfer not to futurity a work  
Of urgent need.—Your Country must complete  
Her glorious destiny. Begin even now,  
Now, when oppression, like the Egyptian plague  
Of darkness, stretched o'er guilty Europe, makes  
The brightness more conspicuous that invests  
The happy Island where ye think and act ;  
Now, when destruction is a prime pursuit,  
Show to the wretched nations for what end  
The powers of civil polity were given."

Abruptly here, but with a graceful air,  
The Sage broke off. No sooner had he ceased  
Than, looking forth, the gentle Lady said,  
" Behold the shades of afternoon have fallen  
Upon this flowery slope ; and see—beyond—  
The silvery lake is streaked with placid blue ;  
As if preparing for the peace of evening.  
How temptingly the landscape shines ! The air  
Breathes invitation ; easy is the walk  
To the lake's margin, where a boat lies moored  
Under a sheltering tree."—Upon this hint  
We rose together ; all were pleased ; but most  
The beauteous girl, whose cheek was flushed with joy.  
Light as a sunbeam glides along the hills  
She vanished—eager to impart the scheme  
To her loved brother and his shy compeer.  
—Now was there bustle in the Vicar's house  
And earnest preparation.—Forth we went,  
And down the vale along the streamlet's edge  
Pursued our way, a broken company,  
Mute or conversing, single or in pairs.  
Thus having reached a bridge, that overarched  
The hasty rivulet where it lay becalmed  
In a deep pool, by happy chance we saw  
A twofold image ; on a grassy bank  
A snow-white ram, and in the crystal flood  
Another and the same ! Most beautiful,  
On the green turf, with his imperial front  
Shaggy and bold, and wreathed horns superb,  
The breathing creature stood ; as beautiful,  
Beneath him, showed his shadowy counterpart.

Each had his glowing mountains, each his sky,  
And each seemed centre of his own fair world :  
Antipodes unconscious of each other,  
Yet, in partition, with their several spheres,  
Blended in perfect stillness, to our sight !

“ Ah ! what a pity were it to disperse,  
Or to disturb, so fair a spectacle,  
And yet a breath can do it ! ”

These few words  
The Lady whispered, while we stood and gazed  
Gathered together, all in still delight,  
Not without awe. Thence passing on, she said  
In like low voice to my particular ear,  
“ I love to hear that eloquent old Man  
Pour forth his meditations, and descant  
On human life from infancy to age.  
How pure his spirit ! in what vivid hues  
His mind gives back the various forms of things,  
Caught in their fairest, happiest, attitude !  
While he is speaking, I have power to see  
Even as he sees ; but when his voice hath ceased,  
Then, with a sigh, sometimes I feel, as now,  
That combinations so serene and bright  
Cannot be lasting in a world like ours,  
Whose highest beauty, beautiful as it is,  
Like that reflected in yon quiet pool,  
Seems but a fleeting sunbeam's gift, whose peace,  
The sufferance only of a breath of air ! ”

More had she said—but sportive shouts were heard  
Sent from the jocund hearts of those two Boys,  
Who, bearing each a basket on his arm,  
Down the green field came tripping after us.  
With caution we embarked ; and now the pair  
For prouder service were address ; but each,  
Wishful to leave an opening for my choice,  
Dropped the light oar his eager hand had seized.  
Thanks given for that becoming courtesy,  
Their place I took—and for a grateful office  
Pregnant with recollections of the time  
When, on thy bosom, spacious Windermere !  
A Youth, I practised this delightful art ;  
Tossed on the waves alone, or 'mid a crew  
Of joyous comrades. Soon as the reedy marge  
Was cleared, I dipped, with arms accordant, oars

Free from obstruction ; and the boat advanced  
Through crystal water, smoothly as a hawk,  
That, disentangled from the shady boughs  
Of some thick wood, her place of covert, cleaves  
With correspondent wings the abyss of air.  
—" Observe," the Vicar said, "yon rocky isle  
With birch-trees fringed ; my hand shall guide the helm,  
While thitherward we shape our course ; or while  
We seek that other, on the western shore ;  
Where the bare columns of those lofty firs,  
Supporting gracefully a massy dome  
Of sombre foliage, seem to imitate  
A Grecian temple rising from the Deep."

" Turn where we may," said I, " we cannot err  
In this delicious region."—Cultured slopes,  
Wild tracts of forest-ground, and scattered groves,  
And mountains bare, or clothed with ancient woods,  
Surrounded us ; and, as we held our way  
Along the level of the glassy flood,  
They ceased not to surround us ; change of place  
From kindred features diversely combined,  
Producing change of beauty ever new.  
—Ah ! that such beauty, varying in the light  
Of living nature, cannot be portrayed  
By words, nor by the pencil's silent skill ;  
But is the property of him alone  
Who hath beheld it, noted it with care,  
And in his mind recorded it with love !  
Suffice it, therefore, if the rural Muse  
Vouchsafe sweet influence, while her Poet speaks  
Of trivial occupations well devised,  
And unsought pleasures springing up by chance ;  
As if some friendly Genius had ordained  
That, as the day thus far had been enriched  
By acquisition of sincere delight,  
The same should be continued to its close.

One spirit animating old and young,  
A gipsy-fire we kindled on the shore  
Of the fair Isle with birch-trees fringed—and there,  
Merrily seated in a ring, partook  
A choice repast—served by our young companions  
With rival earnestness and kindred glee.  
Launched from our hands the smooth stone skimmed the  
lake ;

With shouts we raised the echoes ;—stiller sounds  
 The lovely Girl supplied—a simple song,  
 Whose low tones reached not to the distant rocks  
 To be repeated thence, but gently sank  
 Into our hearts ; and charmed the peaceful flood.  
 Rapaciously we gathered flowery spoils  
 From land and water ; lilies of each hue—  
 Golden and white, that float upon the waves,  
 And court the wind ; and leaves of that shy plant,  
 (Her flowers were shed) the lily of the vale,  
 That loves the ground, and from the sun withholds  
 Her pensive beauty ; from the breeze her sweets.

Such product, and such pastime, did the place  
 And season yield ; but, as we re-embarked,  
 Leaving, in quest of other scenes, the shore  
 Of that wild spot, the Solitary said  
 In a low voice, yet careless who might hear,  
 "The fire, that burned so brightly to our wish,  
 Where is it now?—Deserted on the beach—  
 Dying, or dead ! Nor shall the fanning breeze  
 Revive its ashes. What care we for this,  
 Whose ends are gained ? Behold an emblem here  
 Of one day's pleasure, and all mortal joys !  
 And, in this unpremeditated slight  
 Of that which is no longer needed, see  
 The common course of human gratitude !"

This plaintive note disturbed not the repose  
 Of the still evening. Right across the lake  
 Our pinnace moves ; then, coasting creek and bay,  
 Glades we behold, and into thickets peep,  
 Where couch the spotted deer ; or raised our eyes  
 To shaggy steeps on which the careless goat  
 Browsed by the side of dashing waterfalls ;  
 And thus the bark, meandering with the shore,  
 Pursued her voyage, till a natural pier  
 Of jutting rock invited us to land.

Alert to follow as the Pastor led,  
 We clomb a green hill's side ; and, as we clomb,  
 The Valley, opening out her bosom, gave  
 Fair prospect, intercepted less and less,  
 O'er the flat meadows and indented coast  
 Of the smooth lake, in compass seen :—far off,  
 And yet conspicuous, stood the old Church-tower,

In majesty presiding over fields  
And habitations seemingly preserved  
From all intrusion of the restless world  
By rocks impassable and mountains huge.

Soft heath this elevated spot supplied,  
And choice of moss-clad stones, whereon we couched  
Or sate reclined ; admiring quietly  
The general aspect of the scene ; but each  
Not seldom over anxious to make known  
His own discoveries ; or to favourite points  
Directing notice, merely from a wish  
To impart a joy, imperfect while unshared.  
That rapturous moment never shall I forget  
When these particular interests were effaced  
From every mind !—Already had the sun,  
Sinking with less than ordinary state,  
Attained his western bound ; but rays of light—  
Now suddenly diverging from the orb  
Retired behind the mountain tops or veiled  
By the dense air—shot upwards to the crown  
Of the blue firmament—aloft, and wide :  
And multitudes of little floating clouds,  
Through their ethereal texture pierced—ere we,  
Who saw, of change were conscious—had become  
Vivid as fire ; clouds separately poised,—  
Innumerable multitude of forms  
Scattered through half the circle of the sky ;  
And giving back, and shedding each on each,  
With prodigal communion, the bright hues  
Which from the unapparent fount of glory  
They had imbibed, and ceased not to receive.  
That which the heavens displayed, the liquid deep  
Repeated ; but with unity sublime !

While from the grassy mountain's open side  
We gazed, in silence hushed, with eyes intent  
On the refulgent spectacle, diffused  
Through earth, sky, water, and all visible space,  
The Priest in holy transport thus exclaimed :  
" Eternal Spirit ! universal God !  
Power inaccessible to human thought,  
Save by degrees and steps which thou hast deigned  
To furnish ; for this effluence of thyself,  
To the infirmity of mortal sense  
Vouchsafed ; this local transitory type

Of thy paternal splendours, and the pomp  
 Of those who fill thy courts in highest heaven,  
 The radiant Cherubim ;—accept the thanks  
 Which we, thy humble Creatures, here convened,  
 Presume to offer ; we, who—from the breast  
 Of the frail earth, permitted to behold  
 The faint reflections only of thy face—  
 Are yet exalted, and in soul adore !  
 Such as they are who in thy presence stand  
 Unsullied, incorruptible, and drink  
 Imperishable majesty streamed forth  
 From thy empyreal throne, the elect of earth  
 Shall be—divested at the appointed hour  
 Of all dishonour, cleansed from mortal stain.  
 —Accomplish, then, their number ; and conclude  
 Time's weary course ! Or if, by thy decree,  
 The consummation that will come by stealth  
 Be yet far distant, let thy Word prevail,  
 Oh ! let thy Word prevail, to take away  
 The sting of human nature. Spread the law,  
 As it is written in thy holy book,  
 Throughout all lands ; let every nation hear  
 The high behest, and every heart obey ;  
 Both for the love of purity, and hope  
 Which it affords, to such as do thy will  
 And persevere in good, that they shall rise,  
 To have a nearer view of thee, in heaven.  
 —Father of good ! this prayer in bounty grant,  
 In mercy grant it, to thy wretched sons.  
 Then, not till then, shall persecution cease,  
 And cruel wars expire. The way is marked,  
 The guide appointed, and the ransom paid.  
 Alas ! the nations, who of yore received  
 These tidings, and in Christian temples meet  
 The sacred truth to knowledge, linger still ;  
 Preferring bonds and darkness to a state  
 Of holy freedom, by redeeming love  
 Proffered to all, while yet on earth detained.

So fare the many ; and the thoughtful few,  
 Who in the anguish of their souls bewail  
 This dire perverseness, cannot choose but ask,  
 Shall it endure ?—Shall enmity and strife,  
 Falsehood and guile, be left to sow their seed ;  
 And the kind never perish ? Is the hope  
 Fallacious, or shall righteousness obtain

A peaceable dominion, wide as earth,  
And ne'er to fail? Shall that blest day arrive  
When they, whose choice or lot it is to dwell  
In crowded cities, without fear shall live  
Studious of mutual benefit; and he,  
Whom Morn awakens, among dews and flowers  
Of every clime, to till the lonely field,  
Be happy in himself?—The law of faith  
Working through love, such conquest shall it gain,  
Such triumph over sin and guilt achieve?  
Almighty Lord, thy further grace impart!  
And with that help the wonder shall be seen  
Fulfilled, the hope accomplished; and thy praise  
Be sung with transport and unceasing joy.

Once," and with mild demeanour, as he spake,  
On us the venerable Pastor turned  
His beaming eye that had been raised to Heaven,  
"Once, while the Name, Jehovah, was a sound  
Within the circuit of this sea-girt isle  
Unheard, the savage nations bowed the head  
To Gods delighting in remorseless deeds;  
Gods which themselves had fashioned, to promote  
Ill purposes, and flatter foul desires.  
Then, in the bosom of yon mountain-cove,  
To those inventions of corrupted man  
Mysterious rites were solemnised; and there—  
Amid impending rocks and gloomy woods—  
Of those terrific Idols some received  
Such dismal service, that the loudest voice  
Of the swollen cataracts (which now are heard  
Soft murmuring) was too weak to overcome,  
Though aided by wild winds, the groans and shrieks  
Of human victims, offered up to appease  
Or to propitiate. And, if living eyes  
Had visionary faculties to see  
The thing that hath been as the thing that is,  
Aghast we might behold this crystal Mere  
Bedimmed with smoke, in wreaths voluminous,  
Flung from the body of devouring fires,  
To Taranis erected on the heights  
By priestly hands, for sacrifice performed  
Exultingly, in view of open day  
And full assemblage of a barbarous host;  
Or to Andates, female Power! who gave  
(For so they fancied) glorious victory.

—A few rude monuments of mountain-stone  
Survive ; all else is swept away.—How bright  
The appearances of things ! From such, how changed  
The existing worship ; and with those compared,  
The worshippers how innocent and blest !  
So wide the difference, a willing mind  
Might almost think, at this affecting hour,  
That paradise, the lost abode of man,  
Was raised again : and to a happy few,  
In its original beauty, here restored.

Whence but from thee, the true and only God,  
And from the faith derived through Him who bled  
Upon the cross, this marvellous advance  
Of good from evil ; as if one extreme  
Were left, the other gained.—O ye, who come  
To kneel devoutly in yon reverend Pile,  
Called to such office by the peaceful sound  
Of sabbath bells ; and ye, who sleep in earth,  
All cares forgotten, round its hallowed walls !  
For you, in presence of this little band  
Gathered together on the green hill-side,  
Your Pastor is emboldened to prefer  
Vocal thanksgivings to the eternal King ;  
Whose love, whose counsel, whose commands, have made  
Your very poorest rich in peace of thought  
And in good works ; and him, who is endowed  
With scantiest knowledge, master of all truth  
Which the salvation of his soul requires.  
Conscious of that abundant favour showered  
On you, the children of my humble care,  
And this dear land, our country, while on earth  
We sojourn, have I lifted up my soul,  
Joy giving voice to fervent gratitude.  
These barren rocks, your stern inheritance ;  
These fertile fields, that recompense your pains ;  
The shadowy vale, the sunny mountain-top ;  
Woods waving in the wind their lofty heads,  
Or hushed ; the roaring waters, and the still—  
They see the offering of my lifted hands,  
They hear my lips present their sacrifice,  
They know if I be silent, morn or even :  
For, though in whispers speaking, the full heart  
Will find a vent ; and thought is praise to him,  
Audible praise, to thee, omniscient Mind,  
From whom all gifts descend, all blessings flow ! ”

This vesper-service closed, without delay,  
From that exalted station to the plain  
Descending, we pursued our homeward course,  
In mute composure, o'er the shadowy lake,  
Under a faded sky. No trace remained  
Of those celestial splendours ; grey the vault—  
Pure, cloudless, ether ; and the star of eve  
Was wanting ; but inferior lights appeared  
Faintly, too faint almost for sight ; and some  
Above the darkened hills stood boldly forth  
In twinkling lustre, ere the boat attained  
Her mooring-place ; where, to the sheltering tree,  
Our youthful Voyagers bound fast her prow,  
With prompt yet careful hands. This done, we paced  
The dewy fields ; but ere the Vicar's door  
Was reached, the Solitary checked his steps ;  
Then, intermingling thanks, on each bestowed  
A farewell salutation ; and, the like  
Receiving, took the slender path that leads  
To the one cottage in the lonely dell :  
But turned not without welcome promise made  
That he would share the pleasures and pursuits  
Of yet another summer's day, not loth  
To wander with us through the fertile vales,  
And o'er the mountain-wastes. "Another sun,"  
Said he, "shall shine upon us, ere we part ;  
Another sun, and peradventure more ;  
If time, with free consent, be yours to give,  
And season favours."

To enfeebled Power,  
From this communion with uninjured Minds,  
What renovation had been brought ; and what  
Degree of healing to a wounded spirit,  
Dejected, and habitually disposed  
To seek, in degradation of the Kind,  
Excuse and solace for her own defects ;  
How far those erring notions were reformed ;  
And whether aught, of tendency as good  
And pure, from further intercourse ensued ;  
This—if delightful hopes, as heretofore,  
Inspire the serious song, and gentle Hearts  
Cherish, and lofty Minds approve the past—  
My future labours may not leave untold.

## THE BORDERERS

## A TRAGEDY

Composed at Racedown in Dorsetshire during the latter part of the year 1795, and in the course of the following year. My care was almost exclusively given to the passions and the characters, and the position in which the persons in the Drama stood relatively to each other, that the reader (for I had then no thought of the Stage) might be moved, and to a degree instructed, by lights penetrating somewhat into the depths of our nature.

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

MARMADUKE.	} Of the Band of Borderers.	Forester.
OSWALD.		ELDRED, a Peasant.
WALLACE.		Peasant, Pilgrims, etc.
LACY.		
LENNOX.		IDONEA.
HERBERT.		Female Beggar.
WILFRED, Servant to MARMADUKE.		ELEANOR, Wife to ELDERD.
Host.		

SCENE—*Borders of England and Scotland.*

TIME—*The Reign of Henry III.*

Readers already acquainted with my Poems will recognise, in the following composition, some eight or ten lines which I have not scrupled to retain in the places where they originally stood. It is proper, however, to add, that they would not have been used elsewhere, if I had foreseen the time when I might be induced to publish this Tragedy.

*February 28, 1842.*

## ACT I.

SCENE—*Road in a Wood.*

WALLACE and LACY.

*Lacy.* The troop will be impatient ; let us hie  
Back to our post, and strip the Scottish Foray  
Of their rich Spoil, ere they recross the Border.  
—Pity that our young Chief will have no part  
In this good service.

*Wal.*

Rather let us grieve

That, in the undertaking which has caused  
His absence, he hath sought, whate'er his aim,  
Companionship with One of crooked ways,  
From whose perverted soul can come no good  
To our confiding, open-hearted, Leader.

*Lacy.* True; and, remembering how the Band have  
proved  
That Oswald finds small favour in our sight,  
Well may we wonder he has gained such power  
Over our much-loved Captain.

*Wal.* I have heard  
Of some dark deed to which in early life  
His passion drove him—then a Voyager  
Upon the midland Sea. You knew his bearing  
In Palestine?

*Lacy.* Where he despised alike  
Mahomedan and Christian. But enough;  
Let us begone—the Band may else be foiled. [*Exeunt.*]

*Enter MARMADUKE and WILFRED.*

*Wil.* Be cautious, my dear Master!

*Mar.* I perceive  
That fear is like a cloak which old men huddle  
About their love, as if to keep it warm.

*Wil.* Nay, but I grieve that we should part. This  
Stranger,  
For such he is—

*Mar.* Your busy fancies, Wilfred,  
Might tempt me to a smile; but what of him?

*Wil.* You know that you have saved his life.

*Mar.* I know it.

*Wil.* And that he hates you!—Pardon me, perhaps  
That word was hasty.

*Mar.* Fy! no more of it.

*Wil.* Dear Master! gratitude's a heavy burden  
To a proud Soul.—Nobody loves this Oswald—  
Yourself, you do not love him.

*Mar.* I do more,  
I honour him. Strong feelings to his heart  
Are natural; and from no one can be learnt  
More of man's thoughts and ways than his experience  
Has given him power to teach: and then for courage  
And enterprise—what perils hath he shunned?  
What obstacles hath he failed to overcome?

## THE BORDERERS

## A TRAGEDY

Composed at Racedown in Dorsetshire during the latter part of the year 1795, and in the course of the following year. My care was almost exclusively given to the passions and the characters, and the position in which the persons in the Drama stood relatively to each other, that the reader (for I had then no thought of the Stage) might be moved, and to a degree instructed, by lights penetrating somewhat into the depths of our nature.

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

MARMADUKE.	} Of the Band of Borderers.	Forester.
OSWALD.		ELDRED, a Peasant.
WALLACE.		Peasant, Pilgrims, etc.
LACY.		
LENNOX.		IDONEA.
HERBERT.		Female Beggar.
WILFRED, Servant to MARMADUKE.		ELEANOR, Wife to ELDERD.
Host.		

SCENE—*Borders of England and Scotland.*

TIME—*The Reign of Henry III.*

Readers already acquainted with my Poems will recognise, in the following composition, some eight or ten lines which I have not scrupled to retain in the places where they originally stood. It is proper, however, to add, that they would not have been used elsewhere, if I had foreseen the time when I might be induced to publish this Tragedy.

*February 28, 1842.*

## ACT I.

SCENE—*Road in a Wood.*

WALLACE and LACY.

*Lacy.* The troop will be impatient; let us hie  
Back to our post, and strip the Scottish Foray  
Of their rich Spoil, ere they recross the Border.  
—Pity that our young Chief will have no part  
In this good service.

*Wal.*

Rather let us grieve

That, in the undertaking which has caused  
His absence, he hath sought, whate'er his aim,  
Companionship with One of crooked ways,  
From whose perverted soul can come no good  
To our confiding, open-hearted, Leader.

*Lacy.* True; and, remembering how the Band have  
proved  
That Oswald finds small favour in our sight,  
Well may we wonder he has gained such power  
Over our much-loved Captain.

*Wal.* I have heard  
Of some dark deed to which in early life  
His passion drove him—then a Voyager  
Upon the midland Sea. You knew his bearing  
In Palestine?

*Lacy.* Where he despised alike  
Mahommedan and Christian. But enough;  
Let us begone—the Band may else be foiled. [*Exeunt.*]

*Enter MARMADUKE and WILFRED.*

*Wil.* Be cautious, my dear Master!

*Mar.* I perceive  
That fear is like a cloak which old men huddle  
About their love, as if to keep it warm.

*Wil.* Nay, but I grieve that we should part. This  
Stranger,  
For such he is—

*Mar.* Your busy fancies, Wilfred,  
Might tempt me to a smile; but what of him?

*Wil.* You know that you have saved his life.

*Mar.* I know it.

*Wil.* And that he hates you!—Pardon me, perhaps  
That word was hasty.

*Mar.* Fy! no more of it.

*Wil.* Dear Master! gratitude's a heavy burden  
To a proud Soul.—Nobody loves this Oswald—  
Yourself, you do not love him.

*Mar.* I do more,  
I honour him. Strong feelings to his heart  
Are natural; and from no one can be learnt  
More of man's thoughts and ways than his experience  
Has given him power to teach: and then for courage  
And enterprise—what perils hath he shunned?  
What obstacles hath he failed to overcome?

Answer these questions, from our common knowledge,  
And be at rest.

*Wil.* Oh, Sir!

*Mar.* Peace, my good Wilfred;  
Repair to Liddesdale, and tell the Band  
I shall be with them in two days, at farthest.

*Wil.* May He whose eye is over all protect you! [*Exit.*]

*Enter OSWALD (a bunch of plants in his hand).*

*Osw.* This wood is rich in plants and curious simples.

*Mar.* (*looking at them*). The wild rose, and the poppy,  
and the nightshade:

Which is your favourite, Oswald?

*Osw.* That which, while it is  
Strong to destroy, is also strong to heal—

[*Looking forward.*]  
Not yet in sight!—We'll saunter here awhile;  
They cannot mount the hill, by us unseen.

*Mar.* (*a letter in his hand*). It is no common thing when  
one like you

Performs these delicate services, and therefore

I feel myself much bounden to you, Oswald;

'Tis a strange letter this!—You saw her write it?

*Osw.* And saw the tears with which she blotted it.

*Mar.* And nothing less would satisfy him?

*Osw.* No less;

For that another in his Child's affection

Should hold a place, as if 'twere robbery,

He seemed to quarrel with the very thought.

Besides, I know not what strange prejudice

Is rooted in his mind; this Band of ours,

Which you've collected for the noblest ends,

Along the confines of the Esk and Tweed

To guard the Innocent—he calls us "Outlaws";

And, for yourself, in plain terms he asserts

This garb was taken up that indolence

Might want no cover, and rapacity

Be better fed.

*Mar.* Ne'er may I own the heart  
That cannot feel for one, helpless as he is.

*Osw.* Thou know'st me for a Man not easily moved,  
Yet was I grievously provoked to think  
Of what I witnessed.

*Mar.* This day will suffice

To end her wrongs.

*Osw.* But if the blind Man's tale  
Should yet be true?

*Mar.* Would it were possible !  
Did not the soldier tell thee that himself,  
And others who survived the wreck, beheld  
The Baron Herbert perish in the waves  
Upon the coast of Cyprus?

*Osw.* Yes, even so,  
And I had heard the like before : in sooth  
The tale of this his quondam Barony  
Is cunningly devised ; and, on the back  
Of his forlorn appearance, could not fail  
To make the proud and vain his tributaries,  
And stir the pulse of lazy charity.  
The seignories of Herbert are in Devon ;  
We, neighbours of the Esk and Tweed : 'tis much  
The Arch-Impostor——

*Mar.* Treat him gently, Oswald ,  
Though I have never seen his face, methinks,  
There cannot come a day when I shall cease  
To love him. I remember, when a Boy  
Of scarcely seven years' growth, beneath the Elm  
That casts its shade over our village school,  
'Twas my delight to sit and hear Idonea  
Repeat her Father's terrible adventures,  
Till all the band of playmates wept together ;  
And that was the beginning of my love.  
And, through all converse of our later years,  
An image of this old Man still was present,  
When I had been most happy. Pardon me  
If this be idly spoken.

*Osw.* See, they come,  
Two Travellers !

*Mar.* (*points*). The woman is Idonea.

*Osw.* And leading Herbert.

*Mar.* We must let them pass—  
This thicket will conceal us. [*They step aside.*]

*Enter IDONEA, leading HERBERT blind.*

*Idon.* Dear Father, you sigh deeply ; ever since  
We left the willow shade by the brook-side,  
Your natural breathing has been troubled.

*Her.*

Nay,

You are too fearful; yet must I confess,  
Our march of yesterday had better suited  
A firmer step than mine.

*Idon.*

That dismal Moor—

In spite of all the larks that cheered our path,  
I never can forgive it: but how steadily  
You paced along, when the bewildering moonlight  
Mocked me with many a strange fantastic shape!—  
I thought the Convent never would appear;  
It seemed to move away from us: and yet,  
That you are thus the fault is mine; for the air  
Was soft and warm, no dew lay on the grass,  
And midway on the waste ere night had fallen  
I spied a Covert walled and roofed with sods—  
A miniature; belike some Shepherd-boy,  
Who might have found a nothing-doing hour  
Heavier than work, raised it: within that hut  
We might have made a kindly bed of heath,  
And thankfully there rested side by side  
Wrapped in our cloaks, and, with recruited strength,  
Have hailed the morning sun. But cheerily, Father,—  
That staff of yours, I could almost have heart  
To fling't away from you: you make no use  
Of me, or of my strength;—come, let me feel  
That you do press upon me. There—indeed  
You are quite exhausted. Let us rest awhile  
On this green bank.

[*He sits down.*]

*Her. (after some time).* Idonea, you are silent,  
And I divine the cause.

*Idon.*

Do not reproach me:

I pondered patiently your wish and will  
When I gave way to your request; and now,  
When I behold the ruins of that face,  
Those eyeballs dark—dark beyond hope of light,  
And think that they were blasted for my sake,  
The name of Marmaduke is blown away:  
Father, I would not change that sacred feeling  
For all this world can give.

*Her.*

Nay, be composed:

Few minutes gone a faintness overspread  
My frame, and I bethought me of two things  
I ne'er had heart to separate—my grave,  
And thee, my Child!

*Idon.*

Believe me, honoured Sire!

'Tis weariness that breeds these gloomy fancies,

And you mistake the cause : you hear the woods  
Resound with music, could you see the sun,  
And look upon the pleasant face of Nature—

*Her.* I comprehend thee—I should be as cheerful  
As if we two were twins ; two songsters bred  
In the same nest, my spring-time one with thine.  
My fancies, fancies if they be, are such  
As come, dear Child ! from a far deeper source  
Than bodily weariness. While here we sit  
I feel my strength returning.—The bequest  
Of thy kind Patroness, which to receive  
We have thus far adventured, will suffice  
To save thee from the extreme of penury ;  
But when thy Father must lie down and die  
How wilt thou stand alone ?

*Idon.* Is he not strong ?  
Is he not valiant ?

*Her.* Am I then so soon  
Forgotten ? have my warnings passed so quickly  
Out of thy mind ? My dear, my only, Child ;  
Thou wouldst be leaning on a broken reed—  
This Marmaduke—

*Idon.* O could you hear his voice :  
Alas ! you do not know him. He is one  
(I wot not what ill tongue has wronged him with you)  
All gentleness and love. His face bespeaks  
A deep and simple meekness : and that Soul  
Which with the motion of a virtuous act  
Flashes a look of terror upon guilt,  
Is, after conflict, quiet as the ocean,  
By a miraculous finger, stilled at once.

*Her.* Unhappy Woman !

*Idon.* Nay, it was my duty  
Thus much to speak ; but think not I forget—  
Dear Father ! how *could* I forget and live—  
You and the story of that doleful night  
When, Antioch blazing to her topmost towers,  
You rushed into the murderous flames, returned  
Blind as the grave, but, as you oft have told me,  
Clasping your infant Daughter to your heart.

*Her.* Thy Mother too !—scarce had I gained the door,  
I caught her voice ; she threw herself upon me,  
I felt thy infant brother in her arms ;  
She saw my blasted face—a tide of soldiers  
That instant rushed between us, and I heard

Her last death-shriek, distinct among a thousand.

*Idon.* Nay, Father, stop not ; let me hear it all.

*Her.* Dear Daughter ! precious relic of that time—  
For my old age, it doth remain with thee  
To make it what thou wilt. Thou hast been told,  
That when, on our return from Palestine,  
I found how my domains had been usurped,  
I took thee in my arms, and we began  
Our wanderings together. Providence  
At length conducted us to Rossland,—there,  
Our melancholy story moved a Stranger  
To take thee to her home—and for myself,  
Soon after, the good Abbot of St. Cuthbert's  
Supplied my helplessness with food and raiment,  
And, as thou know'st, gave me that humble Cot  
Where now we dwell.—For many years I bore  
Thy absence, till old age and fresh infirmities  
Exacted thy return, and our reunion.  
I did not think that, during that long absence,  
My Child, forgetful of the name of Herbert,  
Had given her love to a wild Freebooter,  
Who here, upon the borders of the Tweed,  
Doth prey alike on two distracted Countries,  
Traitor to both.

*Idon.* Oh, could you hear his voice !  
I will not call on Heaven to vouch for me,  
But let this kiss speak what is in my heart.

*Enter a Peasant.*

*Pea.* Good morrow, Strangers ! If you want a Guide,  
Let me have leave to serve you !

*Idon.* My Companion  
Hath need of rest ; the sight of Hut or Hostel  
Would be most welcome.

*Pea.* Yon white hawthorn gained,  
You will look down into a dell, and there  
Will see an ash from which a sign-board hangs ;  
The house is hidden by the shade. Old Man,  
You seem worn out with travel—shall I support you ?

*Her.* I thank you ; but, a resting-place so near,  
'Twere wrong to trouble you.

*Pea.* God speed you both.

[*Exit Peasant.*]

*Her.* Idonea, we must part. Be not alarmed—

'Tis but for a few days—a thought has struck me.

*Idon.* That I should leave you at this house, and thence  
Proceed alone. It shall be so; for strength  
Would fail you ere our journey's end be reached.

[*Exit HERBERT supported by IDONEA.*]

*Re-enter MARMADUKE and OSWALD.*

*Mar.* This instant will we stop him——

*Osw.*

Be not hasty,

For, sometimes, in despite of my conviction,  
He tempted me to think the Story true;  
'Tis plain he loves the Maid, and what he said  
That savoured of aversion to thy name  
Appeared the genuine colour of his soul—  
Anxiety lest mischief should befall her  
After his death.

*Mar.* I have been much deceived.

*Osw.* But sure he loves the Maiden, and never love  
Could find delight to nurse itself so strangely,  
Thus to torment her with *inventions*!—death—  
There must be truth in this.

*Mar.* Truth in his story!

He must have felt it then, known what it was,  
And in such wise to rack her gentle heart  
Had been a tenfold cruelty.

*Osw.* Strange pleasures

Do we poor mortals cater for ourselves!  
To see him thus provoke her tenderness  
With tales of weakness and infirmity!  
I'd wager on his life for twenty years.

*Mar.* We will not waste an hour in such a cause.

*Osw.* Why, this is noble! shake her off at once.

*Mar.* Her virtues are his instruments.—A Man  
Who has so practised on the world's cold sense,  
May well deceive his Child—what! leave her thus,  
A prey to a deceiver?—no—no—no—  
'Tis but a word and then——

*Osw.*

Something is here  
More than we see, or whence this strong aversion?  
Marmaduke! I suspect unworthy tales  
Have reached his ear—you have had enemies.

*Mar.* Enemies!—of his own coinage.

*Osw.*

That may be,

But wherefore slight protection such as you

Have power to yield? perhaps he looks elsewhere.—  
I am perplexed.

*Mar.* What hast thou heard or seen?

*Osw.* No—no—the thing stands clear of mystery;  
(As you have said) he coins himself the slander  
With which he taints her ear;—for a plain reason;  
He dreads the presence of a virtuous man  
Like you; he knows your eye would search his heart,  
Your justice stamp upon his evil deeds  
The punishment they merit. All is plain:  
It cannot be——

*Mar.* What cannot be?

*Osw.* Yet that a Father  
Should in his love admit no rivalry,  
And torture thus the heart of his own Child——

*Mar.* Nay, you abuse my friendship!

*Osw.* Heaven forbid!—  
There was a circumstance, trifling indeed—  
It struck me at the time—yet I believe  
I never should have thought of it again  
But for the scene which we by chance have witnessed.

*Mar.* What is your meaning?

*Osw.* Two days gone I saw,  
Though at a distance and he was disguised,  
Hovering round Herbert's door, a man whose figure  
Resembled much that cold voluptuary,  
The villain, Clifford. He hates you, and he knows  
Where he can stab you deepest.

*Mar.* Clifford never  
Would stoop to skulk about a Cottage door—  
It could not be.

*Osw.* And yet I now remember,  
That, when your praise was warm upon my tongue,  
And the blind Man was told how you had rescued  
A maiden from the ruffian violence  
Of this same Clifford, he became impatient  
And would not hear me.

*Mar.* No—it cannot be—  
I dare not trust myself with such a thought—  
Yet whence this strange aversion? You are a man  
Not used to rash conjectures——

*Osw.* If you deem it  
A thing worth further notice, we must act  
With caution, sift the matter artfully.

[*Exeunt* MARMADUKE and OSWALD.]

SCENE—*The door of the Hostel.*

HERBERT, IDONEA, and Host.

*Her. (seated).* As I am dear to you, remember, Child !  
This last request.

*Idon.* You know me, Sire ; farewell !

*Her.* And are you going then ? Come, come, Idonea,  
We must not part,—I have measured many a league  
When these old limbs had need of rest,—and now  
I will not play the sluggard.

*Idon.* Nay, sit down.

[*Turning to Host.*

Good Host, such tendance as you would expect  
From your own Children, if yourself were sick,  
Let this old Man find at your hands ; poor Leader,

[*Looking at the Dog.*

We soon shall meet again. If thou neglect  
This charge of thine, then ill befall thee !—Look,  
The little fool is loth to stay behind.  
Sir Host ! by all the love you bear to courtesy,  
Take care of him, and feed the truant well.

*Host.* Fear not, I will obey you ;—but One so young,  
And One so fair, it goes against my heart  
That you should travel unattended, Lady !—  
I have a palfrey and a groom : the lad  
Shall squire you, (would it not be better, Sir ?)  
And for less fee than I would let him run.  
For any lady I have seen this twelvemonth.

*Idon.* You know, Sir, I have been too long your guard  
Not to have learnt to laugh at little fears.  
Why, if a wolf should leap from out a thicket,  
A look of mine would send him scouring back,  
Unless I differ from the thing I am  
When you are by my side.

*Her.* Idonea, wolves  
Are not the enemies that move my fears.

*Idon.* No more, I pray, of this. Three days at farthest  
Will bring me back—protect him, Saints—farewell !

[*Exit IDONEA.*

*Host.* 'Tis never drought with us—St. Cuthbert and his  
Pilgrims,

Thanks to them, are to us a stream of comfort :  
Pity the Maiden did not wait a while ;  
She could not, Sir, have failed of company.

*Her.* Now she is gone, I fain would call her back.

*Host (calling).* Holla!

*Her.* No, no, the business must be done.—

What means this riotous noise?

*Host.* The villagers

Are flocking in—a wedding festival—

That's all—God save you, Sir.

*Enter OSWALD.*

*Osw.* Ha! as I live,

The Baron Herbert.

*Host.* Mercy, the Baron Herbert!

*Osw.* So far into your journey! on my life,  
You are a lusty Traveller. But how fare you?

*Her.* Well as the wreck I am permits. And you, Sir?

*Osw.* I do not see Idonea.

*Her.* Dutiful Girl,

She is gone before, to spare my weariness.

But what has brought you hither?

*Osw.* A slight affair,

That will be soon despatched.

*Her.* Did Marmaduke

Receive that letter?

*Osw.* Be at peace.—The tie

Is broken, you will hear no more of *him*.

*Her.* This is true comfort, thanks a thousand times!—

That noise!—would I had gone with her as far

As the Lord Clifford's Castle: I have heard

That, in his milder moods, he has expressed

Compassion for me. His influence is great

With Henry, our good King;—the Baron might

Have heard my suit, and urged my plea at Court.

No matter—he's a dangerous Man.—That noise!—

'Tis too disorderly for sleep or rest.

Idonea would have fears for me,—the Convent

Will give me quiet lodging. You have a boy, good Host,

And he must lead me back.

*Osw.* You are most lucky;

I have been waiting in the wood hard by

For a companion—here he comes; our journey

*Enter MARMADUKE.*

Lies on your way; accept us as your Guides.

*Her.* Alas! I creep so slowly.

*Osw.*

Never fear;

We'll not complain of that.

*Her.*

My limbs are stiff

And need repose. Could you but wait an hour?

*Osw.* Most willingly!—Come, let me lead you in,

And, while you take your rest, think not of us;

We'll stroll into the wood; lean on my arm.

[*Conducts HERBERT into the house. Exit MARMADUKE.*]

*Enter Villagers.*

*Osw. (to himself coming out of the Hostel).* I have prepared a most apt Instrument—

The Vagrant must, no doubt, be loitering somewhere

About this ground; she hath a tongue well skilled,

By mingling natural matter of her own

With all the daring fictions I have taught her,

To win belief, such as my plot requires. [*Exit OSWALD.*]

*Enter more Villagers, a Musician among them.*

*Host (to them).* Into the court, my Friend, and perch yourself

Aloft upon the elm-tree. Pretty Maids,

Garlands and flowers, and cakes and merry thoughts,

Are here, to send the sun into the west

More speedily than you belike would wish.

*SCENE changes to the wood adjoining the Hostel—*

*MARMADUKE and OSWALD entering.*

*Mar.* I would fain hope that we deceive ourselves:

When first I saw him sitting there, alone,

It struck upon my heart I know not how.

*Osw.* To-day will clear up all.—You marked a Cottage,

That ragged Dwelling, close beneath a rock

By the brook-side: it is the abode of One,

A Maiden innocent till ensnared by Clifford,

Who soon grew weary of her; but, alas!

What she had seen and suffered turned her brain.

Cast off by her Betrayer, she dwells alone,

Nor moves her hands to any needful work:

She eats her food which every day the peasants

Bring to her hut; and so the Wretch has lived

Ten years ; and no one ever heard her voice ;  
 But every night at the first stroke of twelve  
 She quits her house, and, in the neighbouring Church-  
 yard

Upon the self-same spot, in rain or storm,  
 She paces out the hour 'twixt twelve and one—  
 She paces round and round an Infant's grave,  
 And in the churchyard sod her feet have worn  
 A hollow ring ; they say it is knee-deep—  
 Ah ! what is here ?

[*A female Beggar rises up, rubbing her eyes as if in  
 sleep—a Child in her arms.*]

*Beg.* Oh ! Gentlemen, I thank you ;  
 I've had the saddest dream that ever troubled  
 The heart of living creature.—My poor Babe  
 Was crying, as I thought, crying for bread  
 When I had none to give him ; whereupon,  
 I put a slip of foxglove in his hand,  
 Which pleased him so, that he was hushed at once :  
 When, into one of those same spotted bells  
 A bee came darting, which the Child with joy  
 Imprisoned there, and held it to his ear,  
 And suddenly grew black, as he would die.

*Mar.* We have no time for this, my babbling Gossip ;  
 Here's what will comfort you. [*Gives her money.*]

*Beg.* The Saints reward you  
 For this good deed !—Well, Sirs, this passed away ;  
 And afterwards I fancied, a strange dog,  
 Trotting alone along the beaten road,  
 Came to my child as by my side he slept  
 And, fondling, licked his face, then on a sudden  
 Snapped fierce to make a morsel of his head :  
 But here he is, [*kissing the Child*] it must have been a  
 dream.

*Osw.* When next inclined to sleep, take my advice,  
 And put your head, good Woman, under cover.

*Beg.* Oh, Sir, you would not talk thus, if you knew  
 What life is this of ours, how sleep will master  
 The weary-worn.—You gentlefolk have got  
 Warm chambers to your wish. I'd rather be  
 A stone than what I am.—But two nights gone,  
 The darkness overtook me—wind and rain  
 Beat hard upon my head—and yet I saw  
 A glow-worm, through the covert of the furze,  
 Shine calmly as if nothing ailed the sky :

At which I half accused the God in Heaven.—  
You must forgive me.

*Osw.* Ay, and if you think  
The Fairies are to blame, and you should chide  
Your favourite saint—no matter—this good day  
Has made amends.

*Beg.* Thanks to you both ; but, O sir !  
How would you like to travel on whole hours  
As I have done, my eyes upon the ground,  
Expecting still, I knew not how, to find  
A piece of money glittering through the dust.

*Mar.* This woman is a prater. Pray, good Lady !  
Do you tell fortunes ?

*Beg.* Oh, Sir, you are like the rest.  
This Little-one—it cuts me to the heart—  
Well ! they might turn a beggar from their doors,  
But there are Mothers who can see the Babe  
Here at my breast, and ask me where I bought it :  
This they can do, and look upon my face—  
But you, Sir, should be kinder.

*Mar.* Come hither, Fathers,  
And learn what nature is from this poor Wretch !

*Beg.* Ay, Sir, there's nobody that feels for us.  
Why now—but yesterday I overtook  
A blind old Greybeard and accosted him,  
I' th' name of all the Saints, and by the Mass  
He should have used me better !—Charity !  
If you can melt a rock, he is your man ;  
But I'll be even with him—here again  
Have I been waiting for him.

*Osw.* Well, but softly,  
Who is it that hath wronged you ?

*Beg.* Mark you me ;  
I'll point him out ;—a Maiden is his guide,  
Lovely as Spring's first rose ; a little dog,  
Tied by a woollen cord, moves on before  
With look as sad as he were dumb ; the cur,  
I owe him no ill will, but in good sooth  
He does his Master credit.

*Mar.* As I live,  
'Tis Herbert and no other !

*Beg.* 'Tis a feast to see him,  
Lank as a ghost and tall, his shoulders bent,  
And long beard white with age—yet evermore,  
As if he were the only Saint on earth,

He turns his face to heaven.

*Osw.* But why so violent  
Against this venerable Man?

*Beg.* I'll tell you:  
He has the very hardest heart on earth;  
I had as lief turn to the Friar's school  
And knock for entrance, in mid holiday.

*Mar.* But to your story.  
*Beg.* I was saying, Sir—

Well!—he has often spurned me like a toad,  
But yesterday was worse than all;—at last  
I overtook him, Sirs, my Babe and I,  
And begged a little aid for charity:  
But he was snappish as a cottage cur.  
Well then, says I—I'll out with it; at which  
I cast a look upon the Girl, and felt  
As if my heart would burst; and so I left him.

*Osw.* I think, good Woman, you are the very person  
Whom, but some few days past, I saw in Eskdale,  
At Herbert's door.

*Beg.* Ay; and if truth were known  
I have good business there.

*Osw.* I met you at the threshold,  
And he seemed angry.

*Beg.* Angry! well he might;  
And long as I can stir I'll dog him.—Yesterday,  
To serve me so, and knowing that he owes  
The best of all he has to me and mine.  
But 'tis all over now.—That good old Lady  
Has left a power of riches; and, I say it,  
If there's a lawyer in the land, the knave  
Shall give me half.

*Osw.* What's this?—I fear, good Woman,  
You have been insolent.

*Beg.* And there's the Baron,  
I spied him skulking in his peasant's dress.

*Osw.* How say you? in disguise?—

*Mar.* But what's your business  
With Herbert or his Daughter?

*Beg.* Daughter! truly—  
But how's the day?—I fear, my little Boy,  
We've overslept ourselves.—Sirs, have you seen him?

*Mar.* I must have more of this;—you shall not stir  
An inch, till I am answered. Know you aught  
[Offers to go.]

That doth concern this Herbert?

*Beg.*

You are provoked,

And will misuse me, Sir?

*Mar.*

No trifling, Woman!

*Osw.* You are as safe as in a sanctuary;

Speak.

*Mar.* Speak!

*Beg.*

He is a most hard-hearted Man.

*Mar.* Your life is at my mercy.

*Beg.*

Do not harm me,

And I will tell you all!—You know not, Sir,

What strong temptations press upon the Poor.

*Osw.* Speak out.

*Beg.*

Oh, Sir, I've been a wicked Woman.

*Osw.* Nay, but speak out!

*Beg.*

He flattered me, and said

What harvest it would bring us both; and so,

I parted with the Child.

*Mar.*

Parted with whom?

*Beg.* Idonea, as he calls her; but the Girl

Is mine.

*Mar.* Yours, Woman! are you Herbert's wife?

*Beg.* Wife, Sir! his wife—not I; my husband, Sir,

Was of Kirkoswald—many a snowy winter

We've weathered out together. My poor Gilfred!

He has been two years in his grave.

*Mar.*

Enough.

*Osw.* We've solved the riddle—Miscreant!

*Mar.*

Do you,

Good Dame, repair to Liddesdale and wait

For my return; be sure you shall have justice.

*Osw.* A lucky woman! go, you have done good service.

[*Aside.*

*Mar.* (*to himself*). Eternal praises on the power that  
saved her!—

*Osw.* (*gives her money*). Here's for your little boy—and  
when you christen him

I'll be his Godfather.

*Beg.*

Oh, Sir, you are merry with me.

In grange or farm this Hundred scarcely owns

A dog that does not know me.—These good Folks,

For love of God, I must not pass their doors;

But I'll be back with my best speed: for you—

God bless and thank you both, my gentle Masters.

[*Exit Beggar.*

*Mar. (to himself).* The cruel Viper!—Poor devoted Maid,  
Now I do love thee.

*Osw.* I am thunderstruck.

*Mar.* Where is she—holla!

*[Calling to the Beggar, who returns; he looks at her stedfastly.]*

You are Idonea's mother?—

Nay, be not terrified—it does me good

To look upon you.

*Osw. (interrupting).* In a peasant's dress  
You saw, who was it?

*Beg.* Nay, I dare not speak;  
He is a man, if it should come to his ears  
I never shall be heard of more.

*Osw.* Lord Clifford?

*Beg.* What can I do? believe me, gentle Sirs,  
I love her, though I dare not call her daughter.

*Osw.* Lord Clifford—did you see him talk with Herbert?

*Beg.* Yes, to my sorrow—under the great oak  
At Herbert's door—and when he stood beside  
The blind Man—at the silent Girl he looked  
With such a look—it makes me tremble, Sir,  
To think of it.

*Osw.* Enough! you may depart.

*Mar. (to himself).* Father!—to God himself we cannot  
give

A holier name; and, under such a mask,  
To lead a Spirit, spotless as the blessed,  
To that abhorred den of brutish vice!—  
Oswald, the firm foundation of my life  
Is going from under me; these strange discoveries—  
Looked at from every point of fear or hope,  
Duty, or love—involve, I feel, my ruin.

## ACT II.

SCENE—*A Chamber in the Hostel—OSWALD alone, rising from a Table on which he had been writing.*

*Osw.* They chose him for their Chief!—what covert part  
He, in the preference, modest Youth, might take,  
I neither know nor care. The insult bred  
More of contempt than hatred; both are flown;  
That either e'er existed is my shame:

'Twas a dull spark—a most unnatural fire  
That died the moment the air breathed upon it.  
—These fools of feeling are mere birds of winter  
That haunt some barren island of the north,  
Where, if a famishing man stretch forth his hand,  
They think it is to feed them. I have left him  
To solitary meditation ;—now  
For a few swelling phrases, and a flash  
Of truth, enough to dazzle and to blind,  
And he is mine for ever—here he comes.

*Enter MARMADUKE.*

*Mar.* These ten years she has moved her lips all day  
And never speaks!

*Osw.* Who is it?

*Mar.* I have seen her.

*Osw.* Oh! the poor tenant of that ragged homestead,  
Her whom the Monster, Clifford, drove to madness.

*Mar.* I met a peasant near the spot; he told me,  
These ten years she had sate all day alone  
Within those empty walls.

*Osw.* I too have seen her;  
Chancing to pass this way some six months gone,  
At midnight, I betook me to the Churchyard:  
The moon shone clear, the air was still, so still  
The trees were silent as the graves beneath them.  
Long did I watch, and saw her pacing round  
Upon the self-same spot, still round and round,  
Her lips for ever moving.

*Mar.* At her door  
Rooted I stood; for, looking at the woman,  
I thought I saw the skeleton of Idonea.

*Osw.* But the pretended Father—

*Mar.* Earthly law  
Measures not crimes like his.

*Osw.* We rank not, happily,  
With those who take the spirit of their rule  
From that soft class of devotees who feel  
Reverence for life so deeply, that they spare  
The verminous brood, and cherish what they spare  
While feeding on their bodies. Would that Idonea  
Were present, to the end that we might hear  
What she can urge in his defence; she loves him.

*Mar.* Yes, loves him; 'tis a truth that multiplies

His guilt a thousand-fold.

*Osw.*

'Tis most perplexing:

What must be done?

*Mar.*

We will conduct her hither;

These walls shall witness it—from first to last

He shall reveal himself.

*Osw.*

Happy are we,  
Who live in these disputed tracts, that own  
No law but what each man makes for himself;  
Here justice has indeed a field of triumph.

*Mar.* Let us be gone and bring her hither;—here

The truth shall be laid open, his guilt proved  
Before her face. The rest be left to me.

*Osw.* You will be firm: but though we well may trust

The issue to the justice of the cause,

Caution must not be flung aside; remember,

Yours is no common life. Self-stationed here

Upon these savage confines, we have seen you

Stand like an isthmus 'twixt two stormy seas

That oft have checked their fury at your bidding.

'Mid the deep holds of Solway's mossy waste,

Your single virtue has transformed a Band

Of fierce barbarians into Ministers

Of peace and order. Aged men with tears

Have blessed their steps, the fatherless retire

For shelter to their banners. But it is,

As you must needs have deeply felt, it is

In darkness and in tempest that we seek

The majesty of Him who rules the world.

Benevolence, that has not heart to use

The wholesome ministry of pain and evil,

Becomes at last weak and contemptible.

Your generous qualities have won due praise,

But vigorous Spirits look for something more

Than Youth's spontaneous products; and to-day

You will not disappoint them; and hereafter—

*Mar.* You are wasting words; hear me then, once for all:

You are a Man—and therefore, if compassion,

Which to our kind is natural as life,

Be known unto you, you will love this Woman,

Even as I do; but I should loathe the light,

If I could think one weak or partial feeling—

*Osw.* You will forgive me—

*Mar.*

If I ever knew

My heart, could penetrate its inmost core,

'Tis at this moment. Oswald, I have loved  
To be the friend and father of the oppressed,  
A comforter of sorrow ;—there is something  
Which looks like a transition in my soul,  
And yet it is not.—Let us lead him hither.

*Osw.* Stoop for a moment ; 'tis an act of justice ;  
And where's the triumph if the delegate  
Must fall in the execution of his office ?  
The deed is done—if you will have it so—  
Here where we stand—that tribe of vulgar wretches  
(You saw them gathering for the festival)  
Rush in—the villains seize us——

*Mar.*

Seize !

*Osw.*

Yes, they—

Men who are little given to sift and weigh—  
Would wreak on us the passion of the moment.

*Mar.* The cloud will soon disperse—farewell—but stay,  
Thou wilt relate the story.

*Osw.*

Am I neither

To bear a part in this Man's punishment,  
Nor be its witness ?

*Mar.*

I had many hopes

That were most dear to me, and some will bear  
To be transferred to thee.

*Osw.*

When I'm dishonoured !

*Mar.* I would preserve thee. How may this be done ?

*Osw.* By showing that you look beyond the instant,

A few leagues hence we shall have open ground,  
And nowhere upon earth is place so fit  
To look upon the deed. Before we enter  
The barren Moor, hangs from a beetling rock  
The shattered Castle in which Clifford oft  
Has held infernal orgies—with the gloom,  
And very superstition of the place,  
Seasoning his wickedness. The Debauchee  
Would there perhaps have gathered the first fruits  
Of this mock Father's guilt.

*Enter Host conducting HERBERT.*

*Host.*

The Baron Herbert

Attends your pleasure.

*Osw.* (to Host).

We are ready—

(to HERBERT) Sir !

I hope you are refreshed—I have just written

A notice for your Daughter, that she may know  
What is become of you.—You'll sit down and sign it ;  
'Twill glad her heart to see her father's signature.

[*Gives the letter he had written.*]

*Her.* Thanks for your care.

[*Sits down and writes. Exit Host.*]

*Osw.* (*aside to MARMADUKE*). Perhaps it would be useful  
That you too should subscribe your name.

[*MARMADUKE overlooks HERBERT—then writes—  
examines the letter eagerly.*]

*Mar.* I cannot leave this paper. [*He puts it up, agitated.*]

*Osw.* (*aside*). Dastard ! Come.

[*MARMADUKE goes towards HERBERT and supports him  
—MARMADUKE tremblingly beckons OSWALD to take  
his place.*]

*Mar.* (*as he quits HERBERT*). There is a palsy in his  
limbs—he shakes.

[*Exeunt OSWALD and HERBERT—MARMADUKE  
following.*]

SCENE changes to a Wood—a Group of Pilgrims and  
IDONEA with them.

*First Pil.* A grove of darker and more lofty shade I  
never saw.

*Sec. Pil.* The music of the birds

Drops deadened from a roof so thick with leaves.

*Old Pil.* This news ! It made my heart leap up with joy.

*Idon.* I scarcely can believe it.

*Old Pil.* Myself, I heard

The Sheriff read, in open Court, a letter  
Which purported it was the royal pleasure  
The Baron Herbert, who, as was supposed,  
Had taken refuge in this neighbourhood,  
Should be forthwith restored. The hearing, Lady,  
Filled my dim eyes with tears.—When I returned  
From Palestine, and brought with me a heart,  
Though rich in heavenly, poor in earthly, comfort,  
I met your Father, then a wandering Outcast :  
He had a Guide, a Shepherd's boy ; but grieved  
He was that One so young should pass his youth  
In such sad service ; and he parted with him.  
We joined our tales of wretchedness together,  
And begged our daily bread from door to door.  
I talk familiarly to you, sweet Lady !

For once you loved me.

*Idon.* You shall back with me  
And see your Friend again. The good old Man  
Will be rejoiced to greet you.

*Old Pil.* It seems but yesterday  
That a fierce storm o'ertook us, worn with travel,  
In a deep wood remote from any town.  
A cave that opened to the road presented  
A friendly shelter, and we entered in.

*Idon.* And I was with you?

*Old Pil.* If indeed 'twas you—  
But you were then a tottering Little-one—  
We sate us down. The sky grew dark and darker :  
I struck my flint, and built up a small fire  
With rotten boughs and leaves, such as the winds  
Of many autumns in the cave had piled.  
Meanwhile the storm fell heavy on the woods ;  
Our little fire sent forth a cheering warmth  
And we were comforted, and talked of comfort ;  
But 'twas an angry night, and o'er our heads  
The thunder rolled in peals that would have made  
A sleeping man uneasy in his bed.  
O Lady, you have need to love your Father.  
His voice—methinks I hear it now, his voice  
When, after a broad flash that filled the cave,  
He said to me, that he had seen his Child,  
A face (no cherub's face more beautiful)  
Revealed by lustre brought with it from Heaven ;  
And it was you, dear Lady !

*Idon.* God be praised,  
That I have been his comforter till now !  
And will be so through every change of fortune  
And every sacrifice his peace requires.—  
Let us be gone with speed, that he may hear  
These joyful tidings from no lips but mine.

[*Exeunt IDONIA and Pilgrims.*]

SCENE—*The Area of a half-ruined Castle—on one side the entrance to a dungeon—OSWALD and MARMADUKE pacing backwards and forwards.*

*Mar.* 'Tis a wild night.

*Osw.* I'd give my cloak and bonnet  
For sight of a warm fire.

*Mar.* The wind blows keen ;  
My hands are numb.

Osw.

Ha! ha! 'tis nipping cold.

[*Blowing his fingers.*]

I long for news of our brave Comrades; Lacy  
Would drive those Scottish Rovers to their dens  
If once they blew a horn this side the Tweed.

Mar. I think I see a second range of Towers;  
This castle has another Area—come,  
Let us examine it.

Osw.

'Tis a bitter night;

I hope Idonea is well housed. That horseman,  
Who at full speed swept by us where the wood  
Roared in the tempest, was within an ace  
Of sending to his grave our precious Charge:  
That would have been a vile mischance.

Mar.

It would.

Osw. Justice had been most cruelly defrauded.

Mar. Most cruelly.

Osw.

As up the steep we clomb,

I saw a distant fire in the north-east;  
I took it for the blaze of Cheviot Beacon:  
With proper speed our quarters may be gained  
To-morrow evening.

[*Looks restlessly towards the mouth of the dungeon.*]

Mar.

When, upon the plank,

I had led him 'cross the torrent, his voice blessed me:  
You could not hear, for the foam beat the rocks  
With deafening noise,—the benediction fell  
Back on himself; but changed into a curse.

Osw. As well indeed it might.

Mar.

And this you deem

The fittest place?

Osw. (*aside*). He is growing pitiful.Mar. (*listening*). What an odd moaning that is!—

Osw.

Mighty odd

The wind should pipe a little, while we stand  
Cooling our heels in this way!—I'll begin  
And count the stars.

Mar. (*still listening*). That dog of his, you are sure,  
Could not come after us—he *must* have perished;  
The torrent would have dashed an oak to splinters.  
You said you did not like his looks—that he  
Would trouble us; if he were here again,  
I swear the sight of him would quail me more  
Than twenty armies.

Osw.

How?

*Mar.* The old blind Man,  
When you had told him the mischance, was troubled  
Even to the shedding of some natural tears  
Into the torrent over which he hung,  
Listening in vain.

*Osw.* He has a tender heart !

[OSWALD offers to go down into the dungeon.]

*Mar.* How now, what mean you ?

*Osw.* Truly, I was going  
To waken our stray Baron. Were there not  
A farm or dwelling-house within five leagues,  
We should deserve to wear a cap and bells,  
Three good round years, for playing the fool here  
In such a night as this.

*Mar.* Stop, stop.

*Osw.* Perhaps,  
You'd better like we should descend together,  
And lie down by his side—what say you to it ?  
Three of us—we should keep each other warm :  
I'll answer for it that our four-legged friend  
Shall not disturb us ; further I'll not engage ;  
Come, come, for manhood's sake !

*Mar.* These drowsy shiverings,  
This mortal stupor which is creeping over me,  
What do they mean ? were this my single body  
Opposed to armies, not a nerve would tremble :  
Why do I tremble now ?—Is not the depth  
Of this Man's crimes beyond the reach of thought ?  
And yet, in plumbing the abyss for judgment,  
Something I strike upon which turns my mind  
Back on herself, I think, again—my breast  
Concentres all the terrors of the Universe :  
I look at him and tremble like a child.

*Osw.* Is it possible ?

*Mar.* One thing you noticed not :  
Just as we left the glen a clap of thunder  
Burst on the mountains with hell-rousing force.  
This is a time, said he, when guilt may shudder ;  
But there's a Providence for them who walk  
In helplessness, when innocence is with them.  
At this audacious blasphemy, I thought  
The spirit of vengeance seemed to ride the air.

*Osw.* Why are you not the man you were that moment ?

[He draws MARMADUKE to the dungeon.]

*Mar.* You say he was asleep,—look at this arm,

And tell me if 'tis fit for such a work.

Oswald, Oswald!

[*Leans upon OSWALD.*

*Osw.*

This is some sudden seizure!

*Mar.* A most strange faintness,—will you hunt me out  
A draught of water?

*Osw.*

Nay, to see you thus

Moves me beyond my bearing.—I will try

To gain the torrent's brink.

[*Exit OSWALD.*

*Mar.* (*after a pause*).

It seems an age

Since that Man left me.—No, I am not lost.

*Her.* (*at the mouth of the dungeon*). Give me your hand;  
where are you, Friends? and tell me

How goes the night.

*Mar.*

'Tis hard to measure time,

In such a weary night, and such a place.

*Her.* I do not hear the voice of my friend Oswald.

*Mar.* A minute past, he went to fetch a draught  
Of water from the torrent. 'Tis, you'll say,  
A cheerless beverage.

*Her.*

How good it was in you

To stay behind!—Hearing at first no answer,  
I was alarmed.

*Mar.*

No wonder; this is a place

That well may put some fears into *your* heart.

*Her.* Why so? a roofless rock had been a comfort,  
Storm-beaten and bewildered as we were;  
And in a night like this, to lend your cloaks  
To make a bed for me!—My Girl will weep  
When she is told of it.

*Mar.*

This Daughter of yours

Is very dear to you.

*Her.*

Oh! but you are young;

Over your head twice twenty years must roll,  
With all their natural weight of sorrow and pain,  
Ere can be known to you how much a Father  
May love his Child.

*Mar.*

Thank you, old Man, for this! [*Aside.*

*Her.* Fallen am I, and worn out, a useless Man;  
Kindly have you protected me to-night,  
And no return have I to make but prayers;  
May you in age be blest with such a daughter!—  
When from the Holy Land I had returned  
Sightless, and from my heritage was driven,  
A wretched Outcast—but this strain of thought  
Would lead me to talk fondly.

*Mar.* Do not fear ;  
Your words are precious to my ears ; go on.

*Her.* You will forgive me, but my heart runs over.  
When my old Leader slipped into the flood  
And perished, what a piercing outcry you  
Sent after him. I have loved you ever since.  
You start—where are we ?

*Mar.* Oh, there is no danger ;  
The cold blast struck me.

*Her.* 'Twas a foolish question.

*Mar.* But when you were an Outcast ?—Heaven is just ;  
Your piety would not miss its due reward ;  
The little Orphan then would be your succour,  
And do good service, though she knew it not.

*Her.* I turned me from the dwellings of my Fathers,  
Where none but those who trampled on my rights  
Seemed to remember me. To the wide world  
I bore her, in my arms ; her looks won pity ;  
She was my Raven in the wilderness,  
And brought me food. Have I not cause to love her ?

*Mar.* Yes.

*Her.* More than ever Parent loved a Child ?

*Mar.* Yes, yes.

*Her.* I will not murmur, merciful God !  
I will not murmur ; blasted as I have been,  
Thou hast left me ears to hear my Daughter's voice,  
And arms to fold her to my heart. Submissively  
Thee I adore, and find my rest in faith.

*Enter OSWALD.*

*Osw.* Herbert !—confusion ! (*aside*). Here it is, my  
Friend, [*Presents the Horn.*]  
A charming beverage for you to carouse,  
This bitter night.

*Her.* Ha ! Oswald ! ten bright crosses  
I would have given, not many minutes gone,  
To have heard your voice.

*Osw.* Your couch, I fear, good Baron,  
Has been but comfortless ; and yet that place,  
When the tempestuous wind first drove us hither,  
Felt warm as a wren's nest. You'd better turn  
And under covert rest till break of day,  
Or till the storm abate.

(*To MARMADUKE aside*). He has restored you.  
No doubt you have been nobly entertained ?

But soft !—how came he forth ? The Night-mare Conscience  
Has driven him out of harbour ?

*Mar.*

I believe

You have guessed right.

*Her.*

The trees renew their murmur :

Come, let us house together.

[*OSWALD conducts him to the dungeon.*]

*Osw. (returns).*

Had I not

Esteemed you worthy to conduct the affair

To its most fit conclusion, do you think

I would so long have struggled with my Nature,

And smothered all that's man in me ?—away !—

[*Looking towards the dungeon.*]

This man's the property of him who best

Can feel his crimes. I have resigned a privilege ;

It now becomes my duty to resume it.

*Mar.* Touch not a finger—

*Osw.*

What then must be done ?

*Mar.* Which way so'er I turn, I am perplexed.

*Osw.* Now, on my life, I grieve for you. The misery

Of doubt is insupportable. Pity, the facts

Did not admit of stronger evidence ;

Twelve honest men, plain men, would set us right ;

Their verdict would abolish these weak scruples.

*Mar.* Weak ! I am weak—there does my torment lie,  
Feeding itself.

*Osw.*

Verily, when he said

How his old heart would leap to hear her steps,

You thought his voice the echo of Idonea's.

*Mar.* And never heard a sound so terrible.

*Osw.* Perchance you think so now ?

*Mar.*

I cannot do it :

Twice did I spring to grasp his withered throat,

When such a sudden weakness fell upon me,

I could have dropped asleep upon his breast.

*Osw.* Justice—is there not thunder in the word ?

Shall it be law to stab the petty robber

Who aims but at our purse ; and shall this Parricide—

Worse is he far, far worse (if foul dishonour

Be worse than death) to that confiding Creature

Whom he to more than filial love and duty

Hath falsely trained—shall he fulfil his purpose ?

But you are fallen.

*Mar.*

Fallen should I be indeed—

Murder—perhaps asleep, blind, old, alone,

Betrayed, in darkness! Here to strike the blow—  
Away! away! ———

*[Flings away his sword.]*

*Osw.* Nay, I have done with you :  
We'll lead him to the Convent. He shall live,  
And she shall love him. With unquestioned title  
He shall be seated in his Barony,  
And we too chant the praise of his good deeds.  
I now perceive we do mistake our masters,  
And most despise the men who best can teach us :  
Henceforth it shall be said that bad men only  
Are brave : Clifford is brave ; and that old Man  
Is brave.

*[Taking MARMADUKE's sword and giving it to him.]*

To Clifford's arms he would have led  
His Victim—haply to this desolate house.

*Mar.* *(advancing to the dungeon).* It must be ended!—

*Osw.* Softly ; do not rouse him ;  
He will deny it to the last. He lies  
Within the Vault, a spear's length to the left.

*[MARMADUKE descends to the dungeon.]*

*(Alone.)* The Villains rose in mutiny to destroy me ;  
I could have quelled the Cowards, but this Stripling  
Must needs step in, and save my life. The look  
With which he gave the boon—I see it now !  
The same that tempted me to loathe the gift.—  
For this old venerable Greybeard—faith  
'Tis his own fault if he hath got a face  
Which doth play tricks with them that look on it :  
'Twas this that put it in my thoughts—that countenance—  
His staff—his figure—Murder!—what, of whom ?  
We kill a worn-out horse, and who but women  
Sigh at the deed ? Hew down a withered tree,  
And none look grave but dotards. He may live  
To thank me for this service. Rainbow arches,  
*Highways of dreaming passion, have too long,*  
Young as he is, diverted wish and hope  
From the unpretending ground we mortals tread ;—  
Then shatter the delusion, break it up  
And set him free. What follows ? I have learned  
That things will work to ends the slaves o' the world  
Do never dream of. I *have* been what he—  
This Boy—when he comes forth with bloody hands—  
Might envy, and am now,—but he shall know  
What I am now—

*[Goes and listens at the dungeon  
Praying or parleying?—tut !]*

Is he not eyeless? He has been half-dead  
These fifteen years——

*Enter female Beggar with two or three of her Companions.*

*(Turning abruptly.)* Ha! speak—what Thing art thou?  
*(Recognises her.)* Heavens! my good Friend! *[To her.*

*Beg.* Forgive me, gracious Sir!—  
*Osw. (to her companions).* Begone, ye Slaves, or I will  
raise a whirlwind

And send ye dancing to the clouds, like leaves.

*[They retire affrighted.]*

*Beg.* Indeed we meant no harm; we lodge sometimes  
In this deserted Castle—I repent me.

*[OSWALD goes to the dungeon—listens—returns to the Beggar.]*

*Osw.* Woman, thou hast a helpless Infant—keep  
Thy secret for its sake, or verily  
That wretched life of thine shall be the forfeit.

*Beg.* I do repent me, Sir; I fear the curse  
Of that blind Man. 'Twas not your money, Sir——

*Osw.* Begone!

*Beg. (going).* There is some wicked deed in hand: *[Aside.*  
Would I could find the old Man and his Daughter.

*[Exit Beggar.]*

MARMADUKE re-enters from the dungeon.

*Osw.* It is all over then;—your foolish fears  
Are hushed to sleep, by your own act and deed,  
Made quiet as he is.

*Mar.* Why came you down?  
And when I felt your hand upon my arm  
And spake to you, why did you give no answer?  
Feared you to waken him? he must have been  
In a deep sleep. I whispered to him thrice.  
There are the strangest echoes in that place!

*Osw.* Tut! let them gabble till the day of doom.

*Mar.* Scarcely, by groping, had I reached the Spot,  
When round my wrist I felt a cord drawn tight,  
As if the blind Man's dog were pulling at it.

*Osw.* But after that?

*Mar.* The features of Idonea  
Lurked in his face——

*Osw.* Pshaw! Never to these eyes  
Will retribution show itself again  
With aspect so inviting. Why forbid me  
To share your triumph?

Mar.  
Smiling in sleep——

Yes, her very look,

Osw. A pretty feat of Fancy !

Mar. Though but a glimpse, it sent me to my prayers.

Osw. Is he alive ?

Mar. What mean you ? who alive ?

Osw. Herbert ! since you will have it, Baron Herbert ;  
He who will gain his Seignory when Idonea  
Hath become Clifford's harlot—is *he* living ?

Mar. The old Man in that dungeon *is* alive.

Osw. Henceforth, then, will I never in camp or field  
Obey you more. Your weakness, to the Band,  
Shall be proclaimed : brave Men, they all shall hear it.  
You a protector of humanity !

Avenger you of outraged innocence !

Mar. 'Twas dark—dark as the grave ; yet did I see,  
Saw him—his face turned toward me ; and I tell thee  
Idonea's filial countenance was there  
To baffle me—it put me to my prayers.  
Upwards I cast my eyes, and, through a crevice,  
Beheld a star twinkling above my head,  
And, by the living God, I could not do it. [*Sinks exhausted.*]

Osw. (*to himself*). Now may I perish if this turn do more  
Than make me change my course.

(*To MARMADUKE.*) Dear Marmaduke,  
My words were rashly spoken ; I recall them :  
I feel my error ; shedding human blood  
Is a most serious thing.

Mar. Not I alone,  
Thou too art deep in guilt.

Osw. We have indeed  
Been most presumptuous. There *is* guilt in this,  
Else could so strong a mind have ever known  
These trepidations ? Plain it is that Heaven  
Has marked out this foul Wretch as one whose crimes  
Must never come before a mortal judgment-seat,  
Or be chastised by mortal instruments.

Mar. A thought that's worth a thousand worlds !

[*Goes towards the dungeon.*]

Osw. I grieve  
That, in my zeal, I have caused you so much pain.

Mar. Think not of that ! 'tis over—we are safe.

Osw. (*as if to himself, yet speaking aloud*). The truth is  
hideous, but how stifle it ?

[*Turning to MARMADUKE.*]

Give me your sword—nay, here are stones and fragments,  
 The least of which would beat out a man's brains ;  
 Or you might drive your head against that wall.  
 No! this is not the place to hear the tale :  
 It should be told you pinioned in your bed,  
 Or on some vast and solitary plain  
 Blown to you from a trumpet.

*Mar.*

Why talk thus ?

Whate'er the monster brooding in your breast  
 I care not : fear I have none, and cannot fear——

[*The sound of a horn is heard.*]

That horn again—"Tis some one of our Troop ;  
 What do they here ? Listen !

*Osw.*

What ! dogged like thieves !

*Enter WALLACE and LACY, etc.*

*Lacy.* You are found at last, thanks to the vagrant Troop  
 For not misleading us.

*Osw. (looking at WALLACE).* That subtle Greybeard—  
 I'd rather see my father's ghost.

*Lacy (to MARMADUKE).*

My Captain,

We come by order of the Band. Belike  
 You have not heard that Henry has at last  
 Dissolved the Barons' League, and sent abroad  
 His Sheriffs with fit force to reinstate  
 The genuine owners of such Lands and Baronies  
 As, in these long commotions, have been seized.  
 His Power is this way tending. It befits us  
 To stand upon our guard, and with our swords  
 Defend the innocent.

*Mar.*

Lacy ! we look

But at the surfaces of things ; we hear  
 Of towns in flames, fields ravaged, young and old  
 Driven out in troops to want and nakedness ;  
 Then grasp our swords and rush upon a cure  
 That flatters us, because it asks not thought :  
 The deeper malady is better hid ;  
 The world is poisoned at the heart.

*Lacy.*

What mean you ?

*Wal. (whose eye has been fixed suspiciously upon OSWALD).*

Ay, what is it you mean ?

*Mar.*

Hark'e, my Friends ;—

[*Appearing gay.*]

Were there a Man who, being weak and helpless  
 And most forlorn, should bribe a Mother, pressed

By penury, to yield him up her Daughter,  
A little Infant, and instruct the Babe,  
Prattling upon his knee, to call him Father——

*Lacy.* Why, if his heart be tender, that offence  
I could forgive him.

*Mar. (going on).* And should he make the Child  
An instrument of falsehood, should he teach her  
To stretch her arms, and dim the gladsome light  
Of infant playfulness with piteous looks  
Of misery that was not——

*Lacy.* Troth, 'tis hard——  
But in a world like ours——

*Mar. (changing his tone).* This self-same Man——  
Even while he printed kisses on the cheek  
Of this poor Babe, and taught its innocent tongue  
To lisp the name of Father——could he look  
To the unnatural harvest of that time  
When he should give her up, a Woman grown,  
To him who bid the highest in the market  
Of foul pollution——

*Lacy.* The whole visible world  
Contains not such a Monster!

*Mar.* For this purpose  
Should he resolve to taint her Soul by means  
Which bathe the limbs in sweat to think of them;  
Should he, by tales which would draw tears from iron,  
Work on her nature, and so turn compassion  
And gratitude to ministers of vice,  
And make the spotless spirit of filial love  
Prime mover in a plot to damn his Victim  
Both soul and body——

*Wal.* 'Tis too horrible;  
Oswald, what say you to it?

*Lacy.* Hew him down,  
And fling him to the ravens.

*Mar.* But his aspect  
It is so meek, his countenance so venerable.

*Wal. (with an appearance of mistrust).* But how, what say  
you, Oswald?

*Lacy (at the same moment).* Stab him, were it  
Before the Altar.

*Mar.* What, if he were sick,  
Tottering upon the very verge of life,  
And old, and blind——

*Lacy.* Blind, say you?

*Osw. (coming forward).* Are we Men,  
 Or own we baby Spirits? Genuine courage  
 Is not an accidental quality,  
 A thing dependent for its casual birth  
 On opposition and impediment.  
 Wisdom, if Justice speak the word, beats down  
 The giant's strength; and, at the voice of Justice,  
 Spares not the worm. The giant and the worm—  
 She weighs them in one scale. The wiles of woman,  
 And craft of age, seducing reason, first  
 Made weakness a protection, and obscured  
 The moral shapes of things. His tender cries  
 And helpless innocence—do they protect  
 The infant lamb? and shall the infirmities,  
 Which have enabled this enormous Culprit  
 To perpetrate his crimes, serve as a Sanctuary  
 To cover him from punishment? Shame!—Justice,  
 Admitting no resistance, bends alike  
 The feeble and the strong. She needs not here  
 Her bonds and chains, which make the mighty feeble.  
 —We recognise in this old Man a victim  
 Prepared already for the sacrifice.

*Lacy.* By heaven, his words are reason!

*Osw.*

Yes, my Friends,

His countenance is meek and venerable;  
 And, by the Mass, to see him at his prayers!—  
 I am of flesh and blood, and may I perish  
 When my heart does not ache to think of it!—  
 Poor Victim! not a virtue under heaven  
 But what was made an engine to ensnare thee;  
 But yet I trust, Idonea, thou art safe.

*Lacy.* Idonea!

*Wal.*

How! what? your Idonea?

[*To MARMADUKE.*

*Mar.*

*Mine;*

But now no longer mine. You know Lord Clifford;  
 He is the Man to whom the Maiden—pure  
 As beautiful, and gentle and benign,  
 And in her ample heart loving even me—  
 Was to be yielded up.

*Lacy.*

Now, by the head  
 Of my own child, this Man must die; my hand,  
 A worthier wanting, shall itself entwine  
 In his grey hairs!—

*Mar. (to LACY).* I love the Father in thee.

You know me, Friends ; I have a heart to feel,  
And I have felt, more than perhaps becomes me  
Or duty sanctions.

*Lacy.* We will have ample justice.  
Who are we, Friends ? Do we not live on ground  
Where Souls are self-defended, free to grow  
Like mountain oaks rocked by the stormy wind.  
Mark the Almighty Wisdom, which decreed  
This monstrous crime to be laid open—*here*,  
Where Reason has an eye that she can use,  
And Men alone are Umpires. To the Camp  
He shall be led, and there, the Country round  
All gathered to the spot, in open day  
Shall Nature be avenged.

*Osw.* 'Tis nobly thought ;  
His death will be a monument for ages.

*Mar. (to LACY).* I thank you for that hint. He shall be  
brought  
Before the Camp, and would that best and wisest  
Of every country might be present. There,  
His crime shall be proclaimed ; and for the rest  
It shall be done as Wisdom shall decide :  
Meanwhile, do you two hasten back and see  
That all is well prepared.

*Wal.* We will obey you.  
(*Aside.*) But softly ! we must look a little nearer.

*Mar.* Tell where you found us. At some future time  
I will explain the cause. [*Exeunt.*]

## ACT III

SCENE—*The door of the Hostel, a group of Pilgrims as before ;  
IDONEA and the Host among them.*

*Host.* Lady, you'll find your Father at the Convent  
As I have told you : He left us yesterday  
With two Companions ; one of them, as seemed,  
His most familiar Friend. (*Going.*) There was a letter  
Of which I heard them speak, but that I fancy  
Has been forgotten.

*Idon. (to Host).* Farewell !

*Host.* Gentle pilgrims,  
St. Cuthbert speed you on your holy errand.

[*Exeunt IDONEA and Pilgrims.*]

SCENE—*A desolate Moor.*OSWALD (*alone*).

Osw. Carry him to the Camp! Yes, to the Camp.  
 Oh, Wisdom! a most wise resolve! and then,  
 That half a word should blow it to the winds!  
 This last device must end my work.—Methinks  
 It were a pleasant pastime to construct  
 A scale and table of belief—as thus—  
 Two columns, one for passion, one for proof;  
 Each rises as the other falls: and first,  
 Passion a unit and *against* us—proof—  
 Nay, we must travel in another path,  
 Or we're stuck fast for ever;—passion, then,  
 Shall be a unit *for* us; proof—no passion!  
 We'll not insult thy majesty by time,  
 Person, and place—the where, the when, the how,  
 And all particulars that dull brains require  
 To constitute the spiritless shape of Fact,  
 They bow to, calling the idol, Demonstration.  
 A whipping to the Moralists who preach  
 That misery is a sacred thing: for me,  
 I know no cheaper engine to degrade a man,  
 Nor any half so sure. This Stripling's mind  
 Is shaken till the dregs float on the surface;  
 And, in the storm and anguish of the heart,  
 He talks of a transition in his Soul,  
 And dreams that he is happy. We dissect  
 The senseless body, and why not the mind?—  
 These are strange sights—the mind of man, upturned,  
 Is in all natures a strange spectacle;  
 In some a hideous one—hem! shall I stop?  
 No.—Thoughts and feelings will sink deep, but then  
 They have no substance. Pass but a few minutes,  
 And something shall be done which Memory  
 May touch, when'er her Vassals are at work.

*Enter MARMADUKE, from behind.*Osw. (*turning to meet him*). But listen, for my peace—

Mar. Why, I believe you.

Osw. But hear the proofs—

Mar. Ay, prove that when two peas

Lie snugly in a pod, the pod must then

Be larger than the peas—prove this—'twere matter

Worthy the hearing. Fool was I to dream  
It ever could be otherwise !

*Osw.*

Last night

When I returned with water from the brook,  
I overheard the Villains—every word  
Like red-hot iron burnt into my heart.  
Said one, "It is agreed on. The blind Man  
Shall feign a sudden illness, and the Girl,  
Who on her journey must proceed alone,  
Under pretence of violence, be seized.  
She is," continued the detested Slave,  
"She is right willing—strange if she were not !—  
They say, Lord Clifford is a savage man ;  
But, faith, to see him in his silken tunic,  
Fitting his low voice to the minstrel's harp,  
There's witchery in't. I never knew a maid  
That could withstand it. True," continued he,  
"When we arranged the affair, she wept a little  
(Not the less welcome to my Lord for that)  
And said, 'My Father he will have it so.'"

*Mar.* I am your hearer.

*Osw.*

This I caught, and more

That may not be retold to any ear,  
The obstinate bolt of a small iron door  
Detained them near the gateway of the Castle.  
By a dim lantern's light I saw that wreaths  
Of flowers were in their hands, as if designed  
For festive decoration ; and they said,  
With brutal laughter and most foul allusion,  
That they should share the banquet with their Lord  
And his new Favourite.

*Mar.*

Misery !—

*Osw.*

I knew

How you would be disturbed by this dire news,  
And therefore chose this solitary Moor,  
Here to impart the tale, of which, last night,  
I strove to ease my mind, when our two Comrades,  
Commissioned by the Band, burst in upon us.

*Mar.* Last night, when moved to lift the avenging steel,  
I did believe all things were shadows—yea,  
Living or dead all things were bodiless,  
Or but the mutual mockeries of body,  
Till that same star summoned me back again.  
Now I could laugh till my ribs ached. Oh Fool !  
To let a creed, built in the heart of things,

Dissolve before a twinkling atom !—Oswald,  
 I could fetch lessons out of wiser schools  
 Than you have entered, were it worth the pains.  
 Young as I am, I might go forth a teacher,  
 And you should see how deeply I could reason  
 Of love in all its shapes, beginnings, ends ;  
 Of moral qualities in their diverse aspects ;  
 Of actions, and their laws and tendencies.

*Osw.* You take it as it merits——

*Mar.*

One a King,

General or Cham, Sultan or Emperor,  
 Strews twenty acres of good meadow-ground  
 With carcases, in lineament and shape  
 And substance, nothing differing from his own,  
 But that they cannot stand up of themselves ;  
 Another sits i' th' sun, and by the hour  
 Floats kingcups in the brook—a Hero one  
 We call, and scorn the other as Time's spendthrift ;  
 But have they not a world of common ground  
 To occupy—both fools, or wise alike,  
 Each in his way ?

*Osw.*

Troth, I begin to think so.

*Mar.* Now for the corner-stone of my philosophy :

I would not give a denier for the man  
 Who, on such provocation as this earth  
 Yields, could not chuck his babe beneath the chin,  
 And send it with a fillip to its grave.

*Osw.* Nay, you leave me behind.

*Mar.*

That such a One,

So pious in demeanour ! in his look  
 So saintly and so pure !——Hark'e, my Friend,  
 I'll plant myself before Lord Clifford's Castle,  
 A surly mastiff kennels at the gate,  
 And he shall howl and I will laugh, a medley  
 Most tunable.

*Osw.*

In faith, a pleasant scheme ;  
 But take your sword along with you, for that  
 Might in such neighbourhood find seemly use.—  
 But first, how wash our hands of this old Man ?

*Mar.* Oh yes, that mole, that viper in the path ;  
 Plague on my memory, him I had forgotten.

*Osw.* You know we left him sitting—see him yonder.

*Mar.* Ha ! ha !—

*Osw.* As 'twill be but a moment's work,  
 I will stroll on ; you follow when 'tis done.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE *changes to another part of the Moor at a short distance*

—HERBERT *is discovered seated on a stone.*

*Her.* A sound of laughter, too!—'tis well—I feared,  
The Stranger had some pitiable sorrow  
Pressing upon his solitary heart.  
Hush!—'tis the feeble and earth-loving wind  
That creeps along the bells of the crisp heather.  
Alas! 'tis cold—I shiver in the sunshine—  
What can this mean? There is a psalm that speaks  
Of God's parental mercies—with Idonea  
I used to sing it.—Listen!—what foot is there?

*Enter MARMADUKE.*

*Mar. (aside—looking at HERBERT).* And I have loved  
this Man! and *she* hath loved him!  
And I loved her, and she loves the Lord Clifford!  
And there it ends;—if this be not enough  
To make mankind merry for evermore,  
Then plain it is as day, that eyes were made  
For a wise purpose—verily to weep with! [*Looking round.*  
A pretty prospect this, a masterpiece  
Of Nature, finished with most curious skill!  
(*To HERBERT.*) Good Baron, have you ever practised tillage?  
Pray tell me what this land is worth by the acre?

*Her.* How glad I am to hear your voice! I know not  
Wherein I have offended you;—last night  
I found in you the kindest of Protectors;  
This morning, when I spoke of weariness,  
You from my shoulder took my scrip and threw it  
About your own; but for these two hours past  
Once only have you spoken, when the lark  
Whirled from among the fern beneath our feet,  
And I, no coward in my better days,  
Was almost terrified.

*Mar.* That's excellent!—  
So, you bethought you of the many ways  
In which a man may come to his end, whose crimes  
Have roused all Nature up against him—psaw!—

*Her.* For mercy's sake, is nobody in sight?  
No traveller, peasant, herdsman?

*Mar.* Not a soul:  
Here is a tree, ragged, and bent, and bare,  
That turns its goat's-beard flakes of pea-green moss  
From the stern breathing of the rough sea-wind;

This have we, but no other company :  
 Commend me to the place. If a man should die  
 And leave his body here, it were all one  
 As he were twenty fathoms underground.

*Her.* Where is our common Friend ?

*Mar.* A ghost, methinks—

The Spirit of a murdered man, for instance—  
 Might have fine room to ramble about here,  
 A grand domain to squeak and gibber in.

*Her.* Lost Man ! if thou have any close-pent guilt  
 Pressing upon thy heart, and this the hour  
 Of visitation—

*Mar.* A bold word from *you* !

*Her.* Restore him, Heaven !

*Mar.* The desperate Wretch !—A Flower,  
 Fairest of all flowers, was she once, but now  
 They have snapped her from the stem—Poh ! let her lie  
 Besoiled with mire, and let the houseless snail  
 Feed on her leaves. You knew her well—ay, there,  
 Old Man ! you were a very Lynx, you knew  
 The worm was in her—

*Her.* Mercy ! Sir, what mean you ?

*Mar.* You have a Daughter !

*Her.* Oh that she were here !—

She hath an eye that sinks into all hearts,  
 And if I have in aught offended you,  
 Soon would her gentle voice make peace between us.

*Mar. (aside).* I do believe he weeps—I could weep too—  
 There is a vein of her voice that runs through his :  
 Even such a Man my fancy bodied forth  
 From the first moment that I loved the Maid ;  
 And for his sake I loved her more : these tears—  
 I did not think that aught was left in me  
 Of what I have been—yes, I thank thee, Heaven !  
 One happy thought has passed across my mind.  
 —It may not be—I am cut off from man ;  
 No more shall I be man—no more shall I  
 Have human feelings !—(*To HERBERT*)—Now, for a little  
 more

About your Daughter !

*Her.* Troops of armed men,  
 Met in the roads, would bless us ; little children,  
 Rushing along in the full tide of play,  
 Stood silent as we passed them ! I have heard  
 The boisterous carman, in the miry road,

Check his loud whip and hail us with mild voice,  
And speak with milder voice to his poor beasts.

*Mar.* And whither were you going?

*Her.*

Learn, young Man,

To fear the virtuous, and reverence misery,  
Whether too much for patience, or, like mine,  
Softened till it becomes a gift of mercy.

*Mar.* Now, this is as it should be!

*Her.*

I am weak!—

My Daughter does not know how weak I am;  
And, as thou see'st, under the arch of heaven  
Here do I stand, alone, to helplessness,  
By the good God, our common Father, doomed!—  
But I had once a spirit and an arm—

*Mar.* Now, for a word about your Barony:

I fancy when you left the Holy Land,  
And came to—what's your title—eh? your claims  
Were undisputed!

*Her.*

Like a mendicant,

Whom no one comes to meet, I stood alone;—  
I murmured—but, remembering Him who feeds  
The pelican and ostrich of the desert,  
From my own threshold I looked up to Heaven  
And did not want glimmerings of quiet hope.  
So, from the court I passed, and down the brook,  
Led by its murmur, to the ancient oak  
I came; and when I felt its cooling shade,  
I sate me down, and cannot but believe—  
While in my lap I held my little Babe  
And clasped her to my heart, my heart that ached  
More with delight than grief—I heard a voice  
Such as by Cherith on Elijah called;  
It said, "I will be with thee." A little boy,  
A shepherd-lad, ere yet my trance was gone,  
Hailed us as if he had been sent from heaven,  
And said, with tears, that he would be our guide:  
I had a better guide—that innocent Babe—  
Her, who hath saved me, to this hour, from harm,  
From cold, from hunger, penury, and death;  
To whom I owe the best of all the good  
I have, or wish for, upon earth—and more  
And higher far than lies within earth's bounds:  
Therefore I bless her: when I think of Man,  
I bless her with sad spirit,—when of God,  
I bless her in the fulness of my joy!

*Mar.* The name of daughter in his mouth, he prays !  
 With nerves so steady, that the very flies  
 Sit unmolested on his staff.—Innocent !—  
 If he were innocent—then he would tremble  
 And be disturbed, as I am. (*Turning aside.*) I have read  
 In Story, what men now alive have witnessed,  
 How, when the People's mind was racked with doubt,  
 Appeal was made to the great Judge : the Accused  
 With naked feet walked over burning ploughshares.  
 Here is a Man by Nature's hand prepared  
 For a like trial, but more merciful.  
 Why else have I been led to this bleak Waste ?  
 Bare is it, without house or track, and destitute  
 Of obvious shelter, as a shipless sea.  
 Here will I leave him—here—All-seeing God !  
 Such as *he* is, and sore perplexed as I am,  
 I will commit him to this final *Ordeal* !—  
 He heard a voice—a shepherd-lad came to him  
 And was his guide ; if once, why not again,  
 And in this desert ? If never—then the whole  
 Of what he says, and looks, and does, and is,  
 Makes up one damning falsehood. Leave him here  
 To cold and hunger !—Pain is of the heart,  
 And what are a few throes of bodily suffering  
 If they can waken one pang of remorse ? [*Goes up to HERBERT.*  
 Old Man ! my wrath is as a flame burnt out,  
 It cannot be rekindled. Thou art here  
 Led by my hand to save thee from perdition ;  
 Thou wilt have time to breathe and think——

*Her.*

Oh, Mercy !

*Mar.* I know the need that all men have of mercy,  
 And therefore leave thee to a righteous judgment.

*Her.* My Child, my blessed Child !

*Mar.*

No more of that ;

Thou wilt have many guides if thou art innocent ;  
 Yea, from the utmost corners of the earth,  
 That Woman will come o'er this Waste to save thee.

[*He pauses and looks at HERBERT's staff.*

Ha ! what is here ? and carved by her own hand !

[*Reads upon the staff.*

"I am eyes to the blind, saith the Lord.  
 He that puts his trust in me shall not fail !"  
 Yes, be it so ;—repent and be forgiven—  
 God and that staff are now thy only guides.

[*He leaves HERBERT on the Moor.*

SCENE—*An eminence, a Beacon on the summit.*

LACY, WALLACE, LENNOX, etc. etc.

*Several of the Band (confusedly).* But patience!

*One of the Band.* Curses on that Traitor, Oswald!—

Our Captain made a prey to foul device!—

*Len. (to WAL.)* His tool, the wandering Beggar, made last night

A plain confession, such as leaves no doubt,  
Knowing what otherwise we know too well,  
That she revealed the truth. Stand by me now;  
For rather would I have a nest of vipers  
Between my breast-plate and my skin, than make  
Oswald my special enemy, if you  
Deny me your support.

*Lacy.* We have been fooled—

But for the motive?

*Wal.* Natures such as his

Spin motives out of their own bowels, Lacy!

I learned this when I was a Confessor.

I know him well; there needs no other motive

Than that most strange incontinence in crime

Which haunts this Oswald. Power is life to him

And breath and being; where he cannot govern,

He will destroy.

*Lacy.* To have been trapped like moles!—

Yes, you are right, we need not hunt for motives:

There is no crime from which this man would shrink;

He recks not human law; and I have noticed

That often when the name of God is uttered,

A sudden blankness overspreads his face.

*Len.* Yet, reasoner as he is, his pride has built  
Some uncouth superstition of its own.

*Wal.* I have seen traces of it.

*Len.* Once he headed

A band of Pirates in the Norway seas;

And when the King of Denmark summoned him

To the oath of fealty, I well remember,

'Twas a strange answer that he made; he said,

"I hold of Spirits, and the Sun in heaven."

*Lacy.* He is no madman.

*Wal.* A most subtle doctor

Were that man, who could draw the line that parts

Pride and her daughter, Cruelty, from Madness,

That should be scourged, not pitied. Restless Minds,

Such Minds as find amid their fellow-men  
 No heart that loves them, none that they can love,  
 Will turn perforce and seek for sympathy  
 In dim relation to imagined Beings.

*One of the Band.* What if he mean to offer up our Captain  
 An expiation and a sacrifice  
 To those infernal fiends!

*Wal.* Now, if the event  
 Should be as Lennox has foretold, then swear,  
 My Friends, his heart shall have as many wounds  
 As there are daggers here.

*Lacy.* What need of swearing!

*One of the Band.* Let us away!

*Another.*

Away!

*A third.*

Hark! how the horns  
 Of those Scotch Rovers echo through the vale.

*Lacy.* Stay you behind; and when the sun is down,  
 Light up this beacon.

*One of the Band.* You shall be obeyed.

[*They go out together.*]

SCENE—*The Wood on the edge of the Moor.*

MARMADUKE (*alone*).

*Mar.* Deep, deep and vast, vast beyond human thought,  
 Yet calm.—I could believe, that there was here  
 The only quiet heart on earth. In terror,  
 Remembered terror, there is peace and rest.

*Enter OSWALD.*

*Osw.* Ha! my dear Captain.

*Mar.* A later meeting, Oswald,  
 Would have been better timed.

*Osw.* Alone, I see;  
 You have done your duty. I had hopes, which now  
 I feel that you will justify.

*Mar.* I had fears,  
 From which I have freed myself—but 'tis my wish  
 To be alone, and therefore we must part.

*Osw.* Nay, then—I am mistaken. There's a weakness  
 About you still; you talk of solitude—  
 I am your friend.

*Mar.* What need of this assurance  
 At any time? and why given now?

*Osw.*

Because

You are now in truth my Master ; you have taught me  
What there is not another living man  
Had strength to teach ;—and therefore gratitude  
Is bold, and would relieve itself by praise.

*Mar.* Wherefore press this on me ?

*Osw.*

Because I feel

That you have shown, and by a signal instance,  
How they who would be just must seek the rule  
By diving for it into their own bosoms.  
To-day you have thrown off a tyranny  
That lives but in the torpid acquiescence  
Of our emasculated souls, the tyranny  
Of the world's masters, with the musty rules  
By which they uphold their craft from age to age :  
You have obeyed the only law that sense  
Submits to recognise ; the immediate law,  
From the clear light of circumstances, flashed  
Upon an independent Intellect.  
Henceforth new prospects open on your path ;  
Your faculties should grow with the demand ;  
I still will be your friend, will cleave to you  
Through good and evil, obloquy and scorn,  
Oft as they dare to follow on your steps.

*Mar.* I would be left alone.

*Osw. (exultingly).* I know your motives !

I am not of the world's presumptuous judges,  
Who damn where they can neither see nor feel,  
With a hard-hearted ignorance ; your struggles  
I witnessed, and now hail your victory.

*Mar.* Spare me awhile that greeting.

*Osw.*

It may be,

That some there are, squeamish half-thinking cowards,  
Who will turn pale upon you, call you murderer,  
And you will walk in solitude among them.  
A mighty evil for a strong-built mind !—  
Join twenty tapers of unequal height  
And light them joined, and you will see the less  
How 'twill burn down the taller ; and they all  
Shall prey upon the tallest. Solitude !—  
The Eagle lives in Solitude.

*Mar.*

Even so,

The Sparrow so on the housetop, and I,  
The weakest of God's creatures, stand resolved  
To abide the issue of my act, alone.

*Osw.* Now would you ? and for ever ?—My young Friend,

As time advances either we become  
 The prey or masters of our own past deeds.  
 Fellowship we *must* have, willing or no ;  
 And if good Angels fail, slack in their duty,  
 Substitutes, turn our faces where we may,  
 Are still forthcoming ; some which, though they bear  
 Ill names, can render no ill services,  
 In recompense for what themselves required.  
 So meet extremes in this mysterious world,  
 And opposites thus melt into each other.

*Mar.* Time, since Man first drew breath, has never moved  
 With such a weight upon his wings as now ;  
 But they will soon be lightened.

*Osw.* Ay, look up—  
 Cast round you your mind's eye, and you will learn  
 Fortitude is the child of Enterprise :  
 Great actions move our admiration, chiefly  
 Because they carry in themselves an earnest  
 That we can suffer greatly.

*Mar.* Very true.

*Osw.* Action is transitory—a step, a blow,  
 The motion of a muscle—this way or that—  
 'Tis done, and in the after-vacancy  
 We wonder at ourselves like men betrayed :  
 Suffering is permanent, obscure and dark,  
 And shares the nature of infinity.

*Mar.* Truth—and I feel it.

*Osw.* What ! if you had bid  
 Eternal farewell to unmingled joy  
 And the light dancing of the thoughtless heart ;  
 It is the toy of fools, and little fit  
 For such a world as this. The wise abjure  
 All thoughts whose idle composition lives  
 In the entire forgetfulness of pain.  
 —I see I have disturbed you.

*Mar.* By no means.

*Osw.* Compassion !—pity !—pride can do without them ;  
 And what if you should never know them more !—  
 He is a puny soul who, feeling pain,  
 Finds ease because another feels it too.  
 If e'er I open out this heart of mine  
 It shall be for a nobler end—to teach  
 And not to purchase puling sympathy.  
 —Nay, you are pale.

*Mar.* It may be so.

Osw.

Remorse—

It cannot live with thought ; think on, think on,  
And it will die. What ! in this universe,  
Where the least things control the greatest, where  
The faintest breath that breathes can move a world ;  
What ! feel remorse, where, if a cat had sneezed,  
A leaf had fallen, the thing had never been  
Whose very shadow gnaws us to the vitals.

Mar. Now, whither are you wandering ? That a man  
So used to suit his language to the time,  
Should thus so widely differ from himself—  
It is most strange.

Osw.

Murder !—what's in the word !—

I have no cases by me ready made  
To fit all deeds. Carry him to the Camp !—  
A shallow project ;—you of late have seen  
More deeply, taught us that the institutes  
Of Nature, by a cunning usurpation  
Banished from human intercourse, exist  
Only in our relations to the brutes  
That make the fields their dwelling. If a snake  
Crawl from beneath our feet we do not ask  
A license to destroy him : our good governors  
Hedge in the life of every pest and plague  
That bears the shape of man ; and for what purpose,  
But to protect themselves from extirpation ?—  
This flimsy barrier you have overleaped.

Mar. My Office is fulfilled—the Man is now  
Delivered to the Judge of all things.

Osw.

Dead !

Mar. I have borne my burthen to its destined end.

Osw. This instant we'll return to our companions—  
Oh how I long to see their faces again !

*Enter IDONEA, with Pilgrims who continue their journey.*

Idon. (after some time). What, Marmaduke ! now thou  
art mine for ever.

And Oswald, too ! (To MARMADUKE)—On will we to my  
Father

With the glad tidings which this day hath brought ;  
We'll go together, and, such proof received  
Of his own rights restored, his gratitude  
To God above will make him feel for ours.

Osw. I interrupt you ?

Idon.

Think not so.

*Mar.* Idonea,  
That I should ever live to see this moment !

*Idon.* Forgive me.—Oswald knows it all—he knows,  
Each word of that unhappy letter fell  
As a blood drop from my heart.

*Osw.* 'Twas even so.

*Mar.* I have much to say, but for whose ear?—not  
thine.

*Idon.* Ill can I bear that look.—Plead for me, Oswald !  
You are my Father's Friend.

(*To MARMADUKE*). Alas, you know not,  
And never *can* you know, how much he loved me.  
Twice had he been to me a father, twice  
Had given me breath, and was I not to be  
His daughter, once his daughter? could I withstand  
His pleading face, and feel his clasping arms,  
And hear his prayer that I would not forsake him  
In his old age—— [*Hides her face.*]

*Mar.* Patience—Heaven grant me patience !—  
She weeps, she weeps—my brain shall burn for hours  
Ere I can shed a tear.

*Idon.* I was a woman ;  
And, balancing the hopes that are the dearest  
To womankind with duty to my Father,  
I yielded up those precious hopes, which nought  
On earth could else have wrested from me ;—if erring,  
Oh let me be forgiven !

*Mar.* I do forgive thee.

*Idon.* But take me to your arms—this breast, alas !  
It throbs, and you have a heart that does not feel it.

*Mar.* (*exultingly*). She is innocent. [*He embraces her.*]

*Osw.* (*aside*). Were I a Moralist,  
I should make wondrous revolution here ;  
It were a quaint experiment to show  
The beauty of truth—— [*Addressing them.*]

I see I interrupt you ;  
I shall have business with you, Marmaduke ;  
Follow me to the Hostel. [*Exit OSWALD.*]

*Idon.* Marmaduke,  
This is a happy day. My Father soon  
Shall sun himself before his native doors ;  
The lame, the hungry, will be welcome there.  
No more shall he complain of wasted strength,  
Of thoughts that fail, and a decaying heart ;  
His good works will be balm and life to him.

*Mar.* This is most strange!—I know not what it was,  
But there was something which most plainly said,  
That thou wert innocent.

*Idon.* How innocent!—  
Oh heavens! you've been deceived.

*Mar.* Thou art a Woman,  
To bring perdition on the universe.

*Idon.* Already I've been punished to the height  
Of my offence. [*Smiling affectionately.*]

I see you love me still,  
The labours of my hand are still your joy;  
Bethink you of the hour when on your shoulder  
I hung this belt.

[*Pointing to the belt on which was suspended HERBERT'S scrip.*]

*Mar.* Mercy of Heaven! [*Sinks.*]

*Idon.* What ails you! [*Distractedly.*]

*Mar.* The scrip that held his food, and I forgot  
To give it back again!

*Idon.* What mean your words?

*Mar.* I know not what I said—all may be well.

*Idon.* That smile hath life in it!

*Mar.* This road is perilous;  
I will attend you to a Hut that stands  
Near the wood's edge—rest there to-night, I pray you:  
For me, I have business, as you heard, with Oswald,  
But will return to you by break of day. [*Exeunt.*]

#### ACT IV.

SCENE—*A desolate prospect—a ridge of rocks—a Chapel on the summit of one—Moon behind the rocks—night stormy—irregular sound of a Bell—HERBERT enters exhausted.*

*Her.* That Chapel-bell in mercy seemed to guide me,  
But now it mocks my steps; its fitful stroke  
Can scarcely be the work of human hands.  
Hear me, ye Men, upon the cliffs, if such  
There be who pray nightly before the Altar.  
Oh that I had but strength to reach the place!  
My Child—my child—dark—dark—I faint—this wind—  
These stifling blasts—God help me!

*Enter ELDRED.*

*Eld.* Better this bare rock,  
Though it were tottering over a man's head,

Than a tight case of dungeon walls for shelter  
From such rough dealing. *[A moaning voice is heard.]*

Ha! what sound is that?

Trees creaking in the wind (but none are here)  
Send forth such noises—and that weary bell!  
Surely some evil Spirit abroad to-night  
Is ringing it—'twould stop a Saint in prayer,  
And that—what is it? never was sound so like  
A human groan. Ha! what is here? Poor Man—  
Murdered! alas! speak—speak, I am your friend:  
No answer—hush—lost wretch, he lifts his hand  
And lays it to his heart—*(Kneels to him)*. I pray you speak!  
What has befallen you?

*Her. (feebly).* A stranger has done this,  
And in the arms of a stranger I must die.

*Eld.* Nay, think not so: come, let me raise you up:

*[Raises him.]*

This is a dismal place—well—that is well—  
I was too fearful—take me for your guide  
And your support—my hut is not far off.

*[Draws him gently off the stage.]*

SCENE—*A room in the Hostel*—MARMADUKE and OSWALD.

*Mar.* But for Idonea!—I have cause to think  
That she is innocent.

*Osw.* Leave that thought awhile,  
As one of those beliefs, which in their hearts  
Lovers lock up as pearls, though oft no better  
Than feathers clinging to their points of passion.  
This day's event has laid on me the duty  
Of opening out my story; you must hear it,  
And without further preface.—In my youth,  
Except for that abatement which is paid  
By envy as a tribute to desert,  
I was the pleasure of all hearts, the darling  
Of every tongue—as you are now. You've heard  
That I embarked for Syria. On our voyage  
Was hatched among the crew a foul Conspiracy  
Against my honour, in the which our Captain  
Was, I believed, prime Agent. The wind fell;  
We lay becalmed week after week, until  
The water of the vessel was exhausted;  
I felt a double fever in my veins,  
Yet rage suppressed itself;—to a deep stillness  
Did my pride tame my pride;—for many days,

On a dead sea under a burning sky,  
I brooded o'er my injuries, deserted  
By man and nature;—if a breeze had blown,  
It might have found its way into my heart,  
And I had been—no matter—do you mark me?

*Mar.* Quick—to the point—if any untold crime  
Doth haunt your memory.

*Osw.* Patience, hear me further!—  
One day in silence did we drift at noon  
By a bare rock, narrow, and white, and bare;  
No food was there, no drink, no grass, no shade,  
No tree, nor jutting eminence, nor form  
Inanimate large as the body of man,  
Nor any living thing whose lot of life  
Might stretch beyond the measure of one moon.  
To dig for water on the spot, the Captain  
Landed with a small troop, myself being one:  
There I reproached him with his treachery.  
Imperious at all times, his temper rose;  
He struck me; and that instant had I killed him,  
And put an end to his insolence, but my Comrades  
Rushed in between us: then did I insist  
(All hated him, and I was stung to madness)  
That we should leave him there, alive!—we did so.

*Mar.* And he was famished?

*Osw.* Naked was the spot;  
Methinks I see it now—how in the sun  
Its stony surface glittered like a shield;  
And in that miserable place we left him,  
Alone but for a swarm of minute creatures  
Not one of which could help him while alive,  
Or mourn him dead.

*Mar.* A man by men cast off,  
Left without burial! nay, not dead nor dying,  
But standing, walking, stretching forth his arms,  
In all things like ourselves, but in the agony  
With which he called for mercy; and—even so—  
He was forsaken?

*Osw.* There is a power in sounds:  
The cries he uttered might have stopped the boat  
That bore us through the water——

*Mar.* You returned  
Upon that dismal hearing—did you not?

*Osw.* Some scoffed at him with hellish mockery,  
And laughed so loud it seemed that the smooth sea

Did from some distant region echo us.

*Mar.* We all are of one blood, our veins are filled  
At the same poisonous fountain!

*Osw.* 'Twas an island  
Only by sufferance of the winds and waves,  
Which with their foam could cover it at will.  
I know not how he perished; but the calm,  
The same dead calm, continued many days.

*Mar.* But his own crime had brought on him this doom,  
His wickedness prepared it; these expedients  
Are terrible, yet ours is not the fault.

*Osw.* The man was famished, and was innocent!

*Mar.* Impossible!

*Osw.* The man had never wronged me.

*Mar.* Banish the thought, crush it, and be at peace.  
His guilt was marked—these things could never be  
Were there not eyes that see, and for good ends,  
Where ours are baffled.

*Osw.* I had been deceived.

*Mar.* And from that hour the miserable man  
No more was heard of?

*Osw.* I had been betrayed.

*Mar.* And he found no deliverance!

*Osw.* The Crew

Gave me a hearty welcome; they had laid  
The plot to rid themselves, at any cost,  
Of a tyrannic Master whom they loathed.  
So we pursued our voyage: when we landed,  
The tale was spread abroad; my power at once  
Shrunk from me; plans and schemes, and lofty hopes—  
All vanished. I gave way—do you attend?

*Mar.* The Crew deceived you?

*Osw.* Nay, command yourself.

*Mar.* It is a dismal night—how the wind howls!

*Osw.* I hid my head within a Convent, there  
Lay passive as a dormouse in mid-winter.  
That was no life for me—I was o'erthrown,  
But not destroyed.

*Mar.* The proofs—you ought to have seen  
The guilt—have touched it—felt it at your heart—  
As I have done.

*Osw.* A fresh tide of Crusaders  
Drove by the place of my retreat: three nights  
Did constant meditation dry my blood;  
Three sleepless nights I passed in sounding on,

Through words and things, a dim and perilous way ;  
And, wheresoe'er I turned me, I beheld  
A slavery compared to which the dungeon  
And clanking chains are perfect liberty.  
You understand me—I was comforted ;  
I saw that every possible shape of action  
Might lead to good—I saw it and burst forth  
Thirsting for some of those exploits that fill  
The earth for sure redemption of lost peace.

[Marking MARMADUKE'S countenance.

Nay, you have had the worst. Ferocity  
Subsided in a moment, like a wind  
That drops down dead out of a sky it vexed.  
And yet I had within me evermore  
A salient spring of energy ; I mounted  
From action up to action with a mind  
That never rested—without meat or drink  
Have I lived many days—my sleep was bound  
To purposes of reason—not a dream  
But had a continuity and substance  
That waking life had never power to give.

*Mar.* O wretched Human-kind !—Until the mystery  
Of all this world is solved, well may we envy  
The worm, that, underneath a stone whose weight  
Would crush the lion's paw with mortal anguish,  
Doth lodge, and feed, and coil, and sleep, in safety.  
Fell not the wrath of Heaven upon those traitors ?

*Osw.* Give not to them a thought. From Palestine  
We marched to Syria : oft I left the Camp,  
When all that multitude of hearts was still,  
And followed on, through woods of gloomy cedar,  
Into deep chasms troubled by roaring streams ;  
Or from the top of Lebanon surveyed  
The moonlight desert, and the moonlight sea :  
In these my lonely wanderings I perceived  
What mighty objects do impress their forms  
To elevate our intellectual being ;  
And felt, if aught on earth deserves a curse,  
'Tis that worst principle of ill which dooms  
A thing so great to perish self-consumed.  
—So much for my remorse !

*Mar.*

Unhappy Man !

*Osw.* When from these forms I turned to contemplate  
The World's opinions and her usages,  
I seemed a Being who had passed alone

Into a region of futurity,  
Whose natural element was freedom——

*Mar.*

Stop——

I may not, cannot, follow thee.

*Osw.*

You must.

I had been nourished by the sickly food  
Of popular applause. I now perceived  
That we are praised, only as men in us  
Do recognise some image of themselves,  
An abject counterpart of what they are,  
Or the empty thing that they would wish to be.  
I felt that merit has no surer test  
Than obloquy ; that, if we wish to serve  
The world in substance, not deceive by show,  
We must become obnoxious to its hate,  
Or fear disguised in simulated scorn.

*Mar.* I pity, can forgive, you ; but those wretches——  
That monstrous perfidy !

*Osw.*

Keep down your wrath.

False Shame discarded, spurious Fame despised,  
Twin sisters both of Ignorance, I found  
Life stretched before me smooth as some broad way  
Cleared for a monarch's progress. Priests might spin  
Their veil, but not for me——'twas in fit place  
Among its kindred cobwebs. I had been,  
And in that dream had left my native land,  
One of Love's simple bondsmen—the soft chain  
Was off for ever ; and the men, from whom  
This liberation came, you would destroy :  
Join me in thanks for their blind services.

*Mar.* 'Tis a strange aching that, when we would curse  
And cannot.—You have betrayed me—I have done—  
I am content—I know that he is guiltless—  
That both are guiltless, without spot or stain,  
Mutually consecrated. Poor old Man !  
And I had heart for this, because thou lovedst  
Her who from very infancy had been  
Light to thy path, warmth to thy blood !—Together

[Turning to OSWALD.]

We propped his steps, he leaned upon us both.

*Osw.* Ay, we are coupled by a chain of adamant ;  
Let us be fellow-labourers, then, to enlarge  
Man's intellectual empire. We subsist  
In slavery ; all is slavery ; we receive  
Laws, but we ask not whence those laws have come ;

We need an inward sting to goad us on.

*Mar.* Have you betrayed me? Speak to that.

*Osw.*

The mask,

Which for a season I have stooped to wear,  
Must be cast off.—Know then that I was urged,  
(For other impulse let it pass) was driven,  
To seek for sympathy, because I saw  
In you a mirror of my youthful self;  
I would have made us equal once again,  
But that was a vain hope. You have struck home,  
With a few drops of blood cut short the business;  
Therein for ever you must yield to me.  
But what is done will save you from the blank  
Of living without knowledge that you live:  
Now you are suffering—for the future day,  
'Tis his who will command it.—Think of my story—  
Herbert is *innocent*.

*Mar.* (in a faint voice, and doubtingly). You do but echo  
My own wild words?

*Osw.*

Young Man, the seed must lie  
Hid in the earth, or there can be no harvest;  
'Tis Nature's law. What I have done in darkness  
I will avow before the face of day.  
Herbert is innocent.

*Mar.*

What fiend could prompt  
This action? Innocent!—oh, breaking heart!—  
Alive or dead, I'll find him.

*Osw.*

Alive—perdition!

[*Exit.*

[*Exit.*

SCENE—*The inside of a poor Cottage.*

ELEANOR and IDONEA seated.

*Idon.* The storm beats hard—Mercy for poor or rich,  
Whose heads are shelterless in such a night!

*A Voice without.* Holla! to bed, good Folks, within!

*Elea.*

O save us!

*Idon.* What can this mean?

*Elea.*

Alas, for my poor husband!—  
We'll have a counting of our flocks to-morrow;  
The wolf keeps festival these stormy nights:  
Be calm, sweet Lady, they are wassailers

[*The voices die away in the distance.*

Returning from their Feast—my heart beats so—  
A noise at midnight does so frighten me.

*Idon.* Hush!

[*Listening.*

*Elea.* They are gone. On such a night my husband,  
Dragged from his bed, was cast into a dungeon,  
Where, hid from me, he counted many years,  
A criminal in no one's eyes but theirs—  
Not even in theirs—whose brutal violence  
So dealt with him.

*Idon.* I have a noble Friend  
First among youths of knightly breeding, One  
Who lives but to protect the weak or injured.  
There again!

*Elea.* 'Tis my husband's foot. Good Eldred  
Has a kind heart; but his imprisonment  
Has made him fearful, and he'll never be  
The man he was.

*Idon.* I will retire;—good night!

[*She goes within.*]

*Enter ELDRED (hides a bundle).*

*Eld.* Not yet in bed, Eleanor!—there are stains in that  
frock which must be washed out.

*Elea.* What has befallen you?

*Eld.* I am belated, and you must know the cause—  
(*speaking low*) that is the blood of an unhappy Man.

*Elea.* Oh! we are undone for ever.

*Eld.* Heaven forbid that I should lift my hand against  
any man. Eleanor, I have shed tears to-night, and it  
comforts me to think of it.

*Elea.* Where, where is he?

*Eld.* I have done him no harm, but—it will be forgiven  
me; it would not have been so once.

*Elea.* You have not *buried* anything? You are no  
richer than when you left me?

*Eld.* Be at peace; I am innocent.

*Elea.* Then God be thanked—

[*A short pause; she falls upon his neck.*]

*Eld.* To-night I met with an old Man lying stretched  
upon the ground—a sad spectacle: I raised him up with  
a hope that we might shelter and restore him.

*Elea.* (*as if ready to run*). Where is he? You were  
not able to bring him *all* the way with you; let us return,  
I can help you.

[*ELDRED shakes his head.*]

*Eld.* He did not seem to wish for life: as I was struggling  
on, by the light of the moon I saw the stains of blood upon  
my clothes—he waved his hand, as if it were all useless;  
and I let him sink again to the ground.

*Elea.* Oh that I had been by your side !

*Eld.* I tell you his hands and his body were cold—how could I disturb his last moments ? he strove to turn from me as if he wished to settle into sleep.

*Elea.* But, for the stains of blood—

*Eld.* He must have fallen, I fancy, for his head was cut ; but I think his malady was cold and hunger.

*Elea.* Oh, Eldred, I shall never be able to look up at this roof in storm or fair but I shall tremble.

*Eld.* Is it not enough that my ill stars have kept me abroad to-night till this hour ? I come home, and this is my comfort !

*Elea.* But did he say nothing which might have set you at ease ?

*Eld.* I thought he grasped my hand while he was muttering something about his Child—his Daughter—*(starting as if he heard a noise)*. What is that ?

*Elea.* Eldred, you are a father.

*Eld.* God knows what was in my heart, and will not curse my son for my sake.

*Elea.* But you prayed by him ? you waited the hour of his release ?

*Eld.* The night was wasting fast ; I have no friend ; I am spited by the world—his wound terrified me—if I had brought him along with me, and he had died in my arms !—I am sure I heard something breathing—and this chair !

*Elea.* Oh, Eldred, you will die alone. You will have nobody to close your eyes—no hand to grasp your dying hand—I shall be in my grave. A curse will attend us all.

*Eld.* Have you forgot your own troubles when I was in the dungeon ?

*Elea.* And you left him alive ?

*Eld.* Alive !—the damps of death were upon him—he could not have survived an hour.

*Elea.* In the cold, cold night.

*Eld.* *(in a savage tone)*. Ay, and his head was bare ; I suppose you would have had me lend my bonnet to cover it.—You will never rest till I am brought to a felon's end.

*Elea.* Is there nothing to be done ? cannot we go to the Convent ?

*Eld.* Ay, and say at once that I murdered him !

*Elea.* Eldred, I know that ours is the only house upon the Waste ; let us take heart ; this Man may be rich ; and could he be saved by our means, his gratitude may reward us.

*Eld.* 'Tis all in vain.

*Elea.* But let us make the attempt. This old Man may have a wife, and he may have children—let us return to the spot; we may restore him, and his eyes may yet open upon those that love him.

*Eld.* He will never open them more; even when he spoke to me, he kept them firmly sealed as if he had been blind.

*Idon.* (*rushing out*). It is, it is, my Father—

*Eld.* We are betrayed (*looking at IDONEA*).

*Elea.* His Daughter!—God have mercy! (*turning to IDONEA*).

*Idon.* (*sinking down*). Oh! lift me up and carry me to the place.

You are safe; the whole world shall not harm you.

*Elea.* This Lady is his Daughter.

*Eld.* (*moved*). I'll lead you to the spot.

*Idon.* (*springing up*). Alive!—you heard him breathe?  
quick, quick— [Exit.

#### ACT V.

SCENE—*A wood on the edge of the Waste.*

*Enter OSWALD and a Forester.*

*For.* He leaned upon the bridge that spans the glen,  
And down into the bottom cast his eye,  
That fastened there, as it would check the current.

*Osw.* He listened too; did you not say he listened?

*For.* As if there came such moaning from the flood  
As is heard often after stormy nights.

*Osw.* But did he utter nothing?

*For.* See him there!

MARMADUKE *appearing*.

*Mar.* Buzz, buzz, ye black and winged freebooters;  
That is no substance which ye settle on!

*For.* His senses play him false; and see, his arms  
Outspread, as if to save himself from falling!—  
Some terrible phantom I believe is now  
Passing before him, such as God will not  
Permit to visit any but a man  
Who has been guilty of some horrid crime.

[MARMADUKE *disappears*.

*Osw.* The game is up !—

*For.*

If it be needful, Sir,

I will assist you to lay hands upon him.

*Osw.* No, no, my Friend, you may pursue your business—

'Tis a poor wretch of an unsettled mind,  
Who has a trick of straying from his keepers ;  
We must be gentle. Leave him to my care. [*Exit Forester.*  
Of his own eyes play false with him, these freaks  
Of fancy shall be quickly tamed by mine ;  
The goal is reached. My Master shall become  
A shadow of myself—made by myself.

SCENE—*The edge of the Moor.*

MARMADUKE and ELDRED enter from opposite sides.

*Mar.* (*raising his eyes and perceiving ELDRED*). In any corner of this savage Waste,

Have you, good Peasant, seen a blind old Man ?

*Eld.* I heard—

*Mar.* You heard him, where? when heard him?

*Eld.* As you know,

The first hours of last night were rough with storm :

I had been out in search of a stray heifer ;  
Returning late, I heard a moaning sound ;  
Then, thinking that my fancy had deceived me,  
I hurried on, when straight a second moan,  
A human voice distinct, struck on my ear,  
So guided, distant a few steps, I found  
An aged Man, and such as you describe.

*Mar.* You heard !—he called you to him? Of all men  
The best and kindest !—but where is he? guide me,  
That I may see him.

*Eld.* On a ridge of rocks

A lonesome Chapel stands, deserted now :  
The bell is left, which no one dares remove ;  
And, when the stormy wind blows o'er the peak,  
It rings, as if a human hand were there  
To pull the cord. I guess he must have heard it ;  
And it had led him towards the precipice,  
To climb up to the spot whence the sound came ;  
But he had failed through weakness. From his hand  
His staff had dropped, and close upon the brink  
Of a small pool of water he was laid.

As if he had stooped to drink, and so remained  
Without the strength to rise.

*Mar.* Well, well, he lives,  
And all is safe : what said he ?

*Eld.* But few words :  
He only spake to me of a dear Daughter,  
Who, so he feared, would never see him more ;  
And of a Stranger to him, One by whom  
He had been sore misused ; but he forgave  
The wrong and the wrong-doer. You are troubled—  
Perhaps you are his son ?

*Mar.* The All-seeing knows,  
I did not think he had a living Child.—  
But whither did you carry him ?

*Eld.* He was torn,  
His head was bruised, and there was blood about him——

*Mar.* That was no work of mine.

*Eld.* Nor was it mine.

*Mar.* But had he strength to walk ? I could have borne  
him

A thousand miles.

*Eld.* I am in poverty,  
And know how busy are the tongues of men ;  
My heart was willing, Sir, but I am one  
Whose good deeds will not stand by their own light ;  
And, though it smote me more than words can tell,  
I left him.

*Mar.* I believe that there are phantoms,  
That in the shape of man do cross our path  
On evil instigation, to make sport  
Of our distress—and thou art one of them !  
But things substantial have so pressed on me——

*Eld.* My wife and children came into my mind.

*Mar.* Oh Monster ! Monster ! there are three of us,  
And we shall howl together.

[*After a pause and in a feeble voice.*

I am deserted

At my worst need, my crimes have in a net  
(*Pointing to ELDRED*) Entangled this poor man.—Where  
was it ? where ? (*Dragging him along.*)

*Eld.* 'Tis needless ; spare your violence.  
His Daughter——

*Mar.* Ay, in the word a thousand scorpions lodge :  
This old man *had* a Daughter.

*Eld.* To the spot

I hurried back with her.—O save me, Sir,  
 From such a journey!—there was a black tree,  
 A single tree; she thought it was her Father.—  
 Oh Sir, I would not see that hour again  
 For twenty lives. The daylight dawned, and now—  
 Nay; hear my tale, 'tis fit that you should hear it—  
 As we approached, a solitary crow  
 Rose from the spot;—the Daughter clapped her hands,  
 And then I heard a shriek so terrible

[MARMADUKE *shrinks back*.

The startled bird quivered upon the wing.

*Mar.* Dead, dead!—

*Eld.* (*after a pause*). A dismal matter, Sir, for me,  
 And seems the like for you; if 'tis your wish,  
 I'll lead you to his Daughter; but 'twere best  
 That she should be prepared; I'll go before.

*Mar.* There will be need of preparation.

[ELDRED *goes off*.

*Elea.* (*enters*).

Master!

Your limbs sink under you, shall I support you?

*Mar.* (*taking her arm*). Woman, I've lent my body to the  
 service

Which now thou tak'st upon thee. God forbid  
 That thou shouldst ever meet a like occasion  
 With such a purpose in thine heart as mine was.

*Elea.* Oh, why have I to do with things like these?

[*Exeunt*.

SCENE *changes to the door of* ELDRED's cottage—IDONEA  
*seated*—*enter* ELDRED.

*Eld.* Your Father, Lady, from a wilful hand  
 Has met unkindness; so indeed he told me,  
 And you remember such was my report:  
 From what has just befallen me I have cause  
 To fear the very worst.

*Idon.* My Father is dead;

Why dost thou come to me with words like these?

*Eld.* A wicked Man should answer for his crimes.

*Idon.* Thou seest me what I am.

*Eld.* It was most heinous,

And doth call out for vengeance.

*Idon.* Do not add,

I prithee, to the harm thou'st done already.

*Eld.* Hereafter you will thank me for this service.

Hard by, a Man I met, who, from plain proofs  
Of interfering Heaven, I have no doubt,  
Laid hands upon your Father. Fit it were  
You should prepare to meet him.

*Idon.*

I have nothing

To do with others; help me to my Father—

[*She turns and sees MARMADUKE leaning on ELEANOR—  
throws herself upon his neck, and after some time,*

In joy I met thee, but a few hours past;  
And thus we meet again; one human stay  
Is left me still in thee. Nay, shake not so.

*Mar.* In such a wilderness—to see no thing,  
No, not the pitying moon!

*Idon.*

And perish so.

*Mar.* Without a dog to moan for him.

*Idon.*

Think not of it,

But enter there and see him how he sleeps,  
Tranquil as he had died in his own bed.

*Mar.* Tranquil—why not?

*Idon.*

Oh, peace!

*Mar.*

He is at peace;

His body is at rest: there was a plot,  
A hideous plot, against the soul of man:  
It took effect—and yet I baffled it,  
In some degree.

*Idon.*

Between us stood, I thought,  
A cup of consolation, filled from Heaven  
For both our needs; must I, and in thy presence,  
Alone partake of it?—Beloved Marmaduke!

*Mar.* Give me a reason why the wisest thing  
That the earth owns shall never choose to die,  
But some one must be near to count his groans.  
The wounded deer retires to solitude,  
And dies in solitude: all things but man,  
All die in solitude.

[*Moving towards the cottage door*

Mysterious God,

If she had never lived I had not done it!—

*Idon.* Alas, the thought of such a cruel death  
Has overwhelmed him.—I must follow.

*Eld.*

Lady!

You will do well; (*she goes*) unjust suspicion may  
Cleave to this Stranger: if, upon his entering,  
The dead Man heave a groan, or from his side  
Uplift his hand—that would be evidence.

*Elea.* Shame! *Eldred,* shame!

*Mar. (both returning).* The dead have but one face (to himself).

And such a Man—so meek and unoffending—  
Helpless and harmless as a babe : a Man,  
By obvious signal to the world's protection,  
Solemnly dedicated—to decoy him !—

*Idon.* Oh, had you seen him living !—

*Mar.*

I (so filled

With horror is this world) am unto thee  
The thing most precious, that it now contains :  
Therefore through me alone must be revealed  
By whom thy Parent was destroyed, Idonea !  
I have the proofs !—

*Idon.*

O miserable Father !

Thou didst command me to bless all mankind ;  
Nor to this moment, have I ever wished  
Evil to any living thing ; but hear me,  
Hear me, ye Heavens !—(*kneeling*)—may vengeance haunt  
the fiend

For this most cruel murder : let him live  
And move in terror of the elements ;  
The thunder send him on his knees to prayer  
In the open streets, and let him think he sees,  
If e'er he entereth the house of God,  
The roof, self-moved, unsettling o'er his head ;  
And let him, when he would lie down at night,  
Point to his wife the blood-drops on his pillow !

*Mar.* My voice was silent, but my heart hath joined  
thee.

*Idon. (leaning on MARMADUKE).* Left to the mercy of that  
savage Man !

How could he call upon his Child !—O Friend !

(*Turns to MARMADUKE.*

My faithful true and only Comforter.

*Mar.* Ay, come to me and weep. (*He kisses her.*) (*To*

ELDRED.) Yes, Varlet, look,

The devils at such sights do clap their hands.

(*ELDRED retires alarmed.*

*Idon.* Thy vest is torn, thy cheek is deadly pale ;  
Hast thou pursued the monster ?

*Mar.*

I have found him.—

Oh ! would that thou hadst perished in the flames !

*Idon.* Here art thou, then can I be desolate ?—

*Mar.* There was a time, when this protecting hand  
Availed against the mighty ; never more

Shall blessings wait upon a deed of mine.

*Idon.* Wild words for me to hear, for me, an orphan  
Committed to thy guardianship by Heaven ;  
And, if thou hast forgiven me, let me hope,  
In this deep sorrow, trust, that I am thine  
For closer care ;—here, is no malady. [*Taking his arm.*]

*Mar.* There, is a malady—  
(*Striking his heart and forehead*). And here, and here,  
A mortal malady.—I am accurst :

All nature curses me, and in my heart  
Thy curse is fixed ; the truth must be laid bare.  
It must be told, and borne. I am the man,  
(Abused, betrayed, but how it matters not)  
Presumptuous above all that ever breathed,  
Who, casting as I thought a guilty Person  
Upon Heaven's righteous judgment, did become  
An instrument of Fiends. Through me, through me  
Thy Father perished.

*Idon.* Perished—by what mischance ?

*Mar.* Belovèd !—if I dared, so would I call thee—  
Conflict must cease, and, in thy frozen heart,  
The extremes of suffering meet in absolute peace.

[*He gives her a letter.*]

*Idon.* (*reads*). "Be not surprised if you hear that some  
signal judgment has befallen the man who calls himself  
your father ; he is now with me, as his signature will shew :  
abstain from conjecture till you see me.

" HERBERT.

" MARMADUKE."

The writing Oswald's ; the signature my Father's :

(*Looks steadily at the paper*). And here is yours,—or do  
my eyes deceive me ?

You have then seen my Father ?

*Mar.* He has leaned

Upon this arm.

*Idon.* You led him towards the Convent ?

*Mar.* That Convent was Stone-Arthur Castle. Thither  
We were his guides. I on that night resolved  
That he should wait thy coming till the day  
Of resurrection.

*Idon.* Miserable Woman,  
Too quickly moved, too easily giving way,  
I put denial on thy suit, and hence,  
With the disastrous issue of last night,  
Thy perturbation, and these frantic words.

Be calm, I pray thee !

*Mar.*

Oswald——

*Idon.*

Name him not.

*Enter female Beggar.*

*Beg.* And he is dead !—that Moor—how shall I cross it ?  
By night, by day, never shall I be able  
To travel half a mile alone.—Good Lady !  
Forgive me !—Saints forgive me. Had I thought  
It would have come to this !—

*Idon.*

What brings you hither ? speak !

*Beg.* (*pointing to MARMADUKE*). This innocent Gentle-  
man. Sweet heavens ! I told him  
Such tales of your dead Father !—God is my judge,  
I thought there was no harm : but that bad Man,  
He bribed me with his gold, and looked so fierce.  
Mercy ! I said I know not what—oh pity me—  
I said, sweet Lady, you were not his Daughter—  
Pity me, I am haunted ;—thrice this day  
My conscience made me wish to be struck blind ;  
And then I would have prayed, and had no voice.

*Idon.* (*to MARMADUKE*). Was it my Father ?—no, no, no,  
for he

Was meek and patient, feeble, old and blind,  
Helpless, and loved me dearer than his life.  
—But hear me. For *one* question, I have a heart  
That will sustain me. Did you murder him ?

*Mar.* No, not by stroke of arm. But learn the  
process :

Proof after proof was pressed upon me ; guilt  
Made evident, as seemed, by blacker guilt,  
Whose impious folds enwrapped even thee ; and truth  
And innocence, embodied in his looks,  
His words and tones and gestures, did but serve  
With me to aggravate his crimes, and heaped  
Ruin upon the cause for which they pleaded.  
Then pity crossed the path of my resolve :  
Confounded, I looked up to Heaven, and cast,  
Idonea ! thy blind Father, on the Ordeal  
Of the bleak Waste—left him—and so he died !—

[IDONEA *sinks senseless* ; Beggar, ELEANOR, *etc.*, crowd  
round, and bear her off.

Why may we speak these things, and do no more ;  
Why should a thrust of the arm have such a power,  
And words that tell these things be heard in vain ?

*She is not dead. Why!—if I loved this Woman,  
I would take care she never woke again ;  
But she WILL wake, and she will weep for me,  
And say no blame was mine—and so, poor fool,  
Will waste her curses on another name.*

*[He walks about distractedly.]*

*Enter OSWALD.*

*Osw. (to himself).* Strong to o'eturn, strong also to  
build up. *[To MARMADUKE.]*

The starts and sallies of our last encounter  
Were natural enough ; but that, I trust,  
Is all gone by. You have cast off the chains  
That fettered your nobility of mind—  
Delivered heart and head !

Let us to Palestine ;

This is a paltry field for enterprise.

*Mar.* Ay, what shall we encounter next ? This issue—  
'Twas nothing more than darkness deepening darkness,  
And weakness crowned with the impotence of death !—  
Your pupil is, you see, an apt proficient (*ironically*).  
Start not !—Here is another face hard by ;  
Come, let us take a peep at both together,  
And, with a voice at which the dead will quake,  
Resound the praise of your morality—  
Of this too much.

*[Drawing OSWALD towards the Cottage—stops short  
at the door.]*

Men are there, millions, Oswald,  
Who with bare hands would have plucked out thy heart  
And flung it to the dogs : but I am raised  
Above, or sunk below, all further sense  
Of provocation. Leave me, with the weight  
Of that old Man's forgiveness on thy heart,  
Pressing as heavily as it doth on mine.  
Coward I have been ; know, there lies not now,  
Within the compass of a mortal thought,  
A deed that I would shrink from ;—but to endure,  
That is my destiny. May it be thine :  
Thy office, thy ambition, be henceforth  
To feed remorse, to welcome every sting  
Of penitential anguish, yea with tears.  
When seas and continents shall lie between us—  
The wider space the better—we may find  
In such a course fit links of sympathy,

An incommunicable rivalry  
Maintained, for peaceful ends beyond our view.

[*Confused voices—several of the band enter—rush upon OSWALD and seize him.*

One of them. I would have dogged him to the jaws of hell—

OSW. Ha! is it so!—That vagrant Hag!—this comes  
Of having left a thing like her alive! [Aside.

Several voices. Despatch him!

OSW. If I pass beneath a rock

And shout, and, with the echo of my voice,  
Bring down a heap of rubbish, and it crush me,  
I die without dishonour. Famished, starved,  
A Fool and Coward blended to my wish!

[*Smiles scornfully and exultingly at MARMADUKE.*

Wal. 'Tis done! (*stabs him*).

Another of the band. The ruthless traitor!

Mar. A rash deed!—

With that reproof I do resign a station  
Of which I have been proud.

Wil. (*approaching MARMADUKE*). O my poor Master!

Mar. Discerning Monitor, my faithful Wilfred,  
Why art thou here? [Turning to WALLACE.

Wallace, upon these Borders,

Many there be whose eyes will not want cause  
To weep that I am gone. Brothers in arms!  
Raise on that dreary Waste a monument  
That may record my story: nor let words—  
Few must they be, and delicate in their touch  
As light itself—be there withheld from Her  
Who, through most wicked arts, was made an orphan  
By One who would have died a thousand times  
To shield her from a moment's harm. To you,  
Wallace and Wilfred, I commend the Lady,  
By lowly nature reared, as if to make her  
In all things worthier of that noble birth,  
Whose long-suspended rights are now on the eve  
Of restoration: with your tenderest care  
Watch over her, I pray—sustain her—

Several of the band (*eagerly*). Captain!

Mar. No more of that; in silence hear my doom:  
A hermitage has furnished fit relief  
To some offenders; other penitents,  
Less patient in their wretchedness, have fallen,  
Like the old Roman, on their own sword's point.

They had their choice : a wanderer *must I* go,  
The Spectre of that innocent Man, my guide.  
No human ear shall ever hear me speak ;  
No human dwelling ever give me food,  
Or sleep, or rest : but over waste and wild,  
In search of nothing that this earth can give,  
But expiation, will I wander on—  
A Man by pain and thought compelled to live,  
Yet loathing life—till anger is appeased  
In Heaven, and Mercy gives me leave to die.

# EVERYMAN'S LIBRARY

By ERNEST RHYS

VICTOR HUGO said a Library was "an act of faith," and some unknown essayist spoke of one so beautiful, so perfect, so harmonious in all its parts, that he who made it was smitten with a passion. In that faith the promoters of Everyman's Library planned it out originally on a large scale; and their idea in so doing was to make it conform as far as possible to a perfect scheme. However, perfection is a thing to be aimed at and not to be achieved in this difficult world; and since the first volumes appeared, now several years ago, there have been many interruptions. A great war has come and gone; and even the City of Books has felt something like a world commotion. Only in recent years is the series getting back into its old stride and looking forward to complete its original scheme of a Thousand Volumes. One of the practical expedients in that original plan was to divide the volumes into sections, as Biography, Fiction, History, Belles Lettres, Poetry, Romance, and so forth; with a compartment for young people, and last, and not least, one of Reference Books. Beside the dictionaries and encyclopædias to be expected in that section, there was a special set of literary and historical atlases. One of these atlases dealing with Europe, we may recall, was directly affected by the disturbance of frontiers during the war; and the maps had to be completely revised in consequence, so as to chart

the New Europe which we hope will now preserve its peace under the auspices of the League of Nations set up at Geneva.

That is only one small item, however, in a library list which runs already to the final centuries of the Thousand. The largest slice of this huge provision is, as a matter of course, given to the tyrannous demands of fiction. But in carrying out the scheme, publishers and editors contrived to keep in mind that books, like men and women, have their elective affinities. The present volume, for instance, will be found to have its companion books, both in the same section and even more significantly in other sections. With that idea too, novels like Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* and *Fortunes of Nigel*, Lytton's *Harold* and Dickens's *Tale of Two Cities*, have been used as pioneers of history and treated as a sort of holiday history books. For in our day history is tending to grow more documentary and less literary; and "the historian who is a stylist," as one of our contributors, the late Thomas Seccombe, said, "will soon be regarded as a kind of Phoenix." But in this special department of Everyman's Library we have been eclectic enough to choose our history men from every school in turn. We have Grote, Gibbon, Finlay, Macaulay, Motley, Prescott. We have among earlier books the Venerable Bede and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, have completed a Livy in an admirable new translation by Canon Roberts, while Caesar, Tacitus, Thucydides and Herodotus are not forgotten.

"You only, O Books," said Richard de Bury, "are liberal and independent; you give to all who ask." The delightful variety, the wisdom and the wit which are at the disposal of Everyman in his own library may well, at times, seem to him a little embarrassing. He may turn to Dick Steele in *The Spectator* and learn how Cleomira dances, when the elegance of her motion is unimaginable and "her eyes are chastised with the simplicity and innocence of her thoughts." He may turn to Plato's *Phædrus*

and read how every soul is divided into three parts (like Caesar's Gaul). He may turn to the finest critic of Victorian times, Matthew Arnold, and find in his essay on Maurice de Guérin the perfect key to what is there called the "magical power of poetry." It is Shakespeare, with his

"daffodils  
That come before the swallow dares, and take  
The winds of March with beauty;"

it is Wordsworth, with his

"voice . . . heard  
In spring-thrue from the cuckoo-bird,  
Breaking the silence of the seas  
Among the farthest Hebrides;"

or Keats, with his

". . . moving waters at their priest-like task  
Of cold ablution round Earth's human shores."

William Hazlitt's "Table Talk," among the volumes of *Essays*, may help to show the relationship of one author to another, which is another form of the Friendship of Books. His incomparable essay in that volume, "On Going a Journey," forms a capital prelude to Coleridge's "Biographia Literaria" and to his and Wordsworth's poems. In the same way one may turn to the review of Moore's *Life of Byron* in Macaulay's *Essays* as a prelude to the three volumes of Byron's own poems, remembering that the poet whom Europe loved more than England did was as Macaulay said: "the beginning, the middle and the end of all his own poetry." This brings us to the provoking reflection that it is the obvious authors and the books most easy to reprint which have been the signal successes out of the many hundreds in the series, for Everyman is distinctly proverbial in his tastes. He likes best of all an old author who has worn well or



a comparatively new author who has gained something like newspaper notoriety. In attempting to lead him on from the good books that are known to those that are less known, the publishers may have at times been too adventurous. The late *Chief* himself was much more than an ordinary book-producer in this critical enterprise. He threw himself into it with the zeal of a book-lover and indeed of one who, like Milton, thought that books might be as alive and productive as dragons' teeth, which, being "sown up and down the land, might chance to spring up armed men."

Mr. Pepys in his *Diary* writes about some of his books, "which are come home gilt on the backs, very handsome to the eye." The pleasure he took in them is that which Everyman may take in the gilt backs of his favourite books in his own Library, which after all he has helped to make good and lasting.